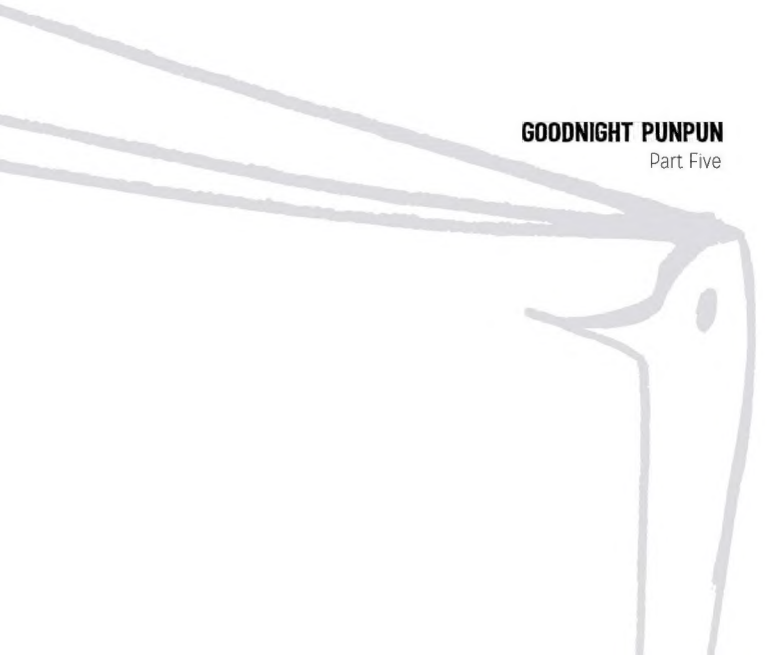
GOODNIGHT
PUNPUN
3
INIO ASANO
PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT
CONTENT

GOODNIGHT PUNPUN

3

Story and Art by INIO ASANO



GOODNIGHT PUNPUN

Part Five

CONTENTS

STORY THUS FAR...

Punpun Onodera has all sorts of feelings he doesn't want to deal with due to his interactions with Aiko Tanaka (the love of his life). So he decides to give his heart a little bit of distance from it all.

Two years later. Now a third-year middle school student, Punpun goes to see the results of his high school entrance exams.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PUNPUN ONODERA
A young, choco pie-loving high school freshman. His favorite clincher move is *Gassho Hineri*.

MAMA ONODERA
Punpun's mother. When she was younger, she tried to be a spokesmodel for a cosmetics brand but didn't make it past the application stage.

YUICHI ONODERA
Mama's younger brother. Teacher at a pottery school. Currently missing.

AIKO TANAKA
The girl Punpun loved in elementary school. They have no particular relationship at the moment.

MIDORI OKUMA
Yuichi's girlfriend. Runs a coffee shop. Practically lives with Punpun.

MASUMI SEKI
Punpun's classmate. He has no plans for further education after middle school.

SHIMIZU
Punpun's classmate. He and Seki have been friends since kindergarten.

YUGAMI
The lawyer who handled Mama's divorce. A friend of Yuichi's.

TOSHIKI
A fairy who lives in town.

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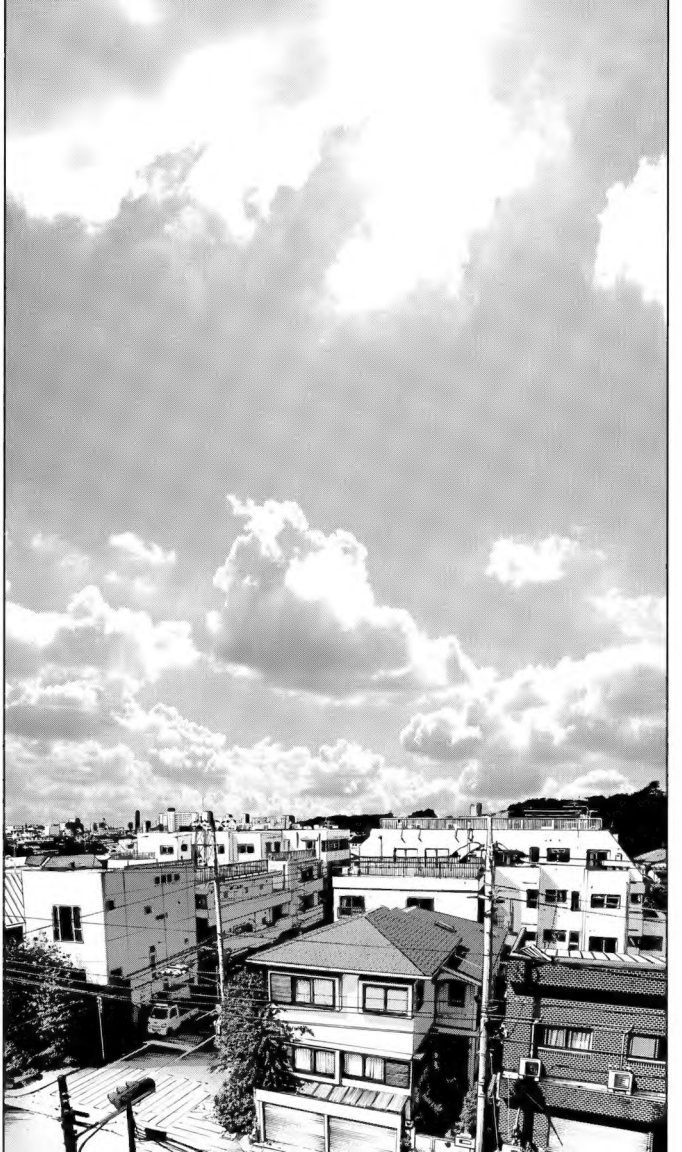
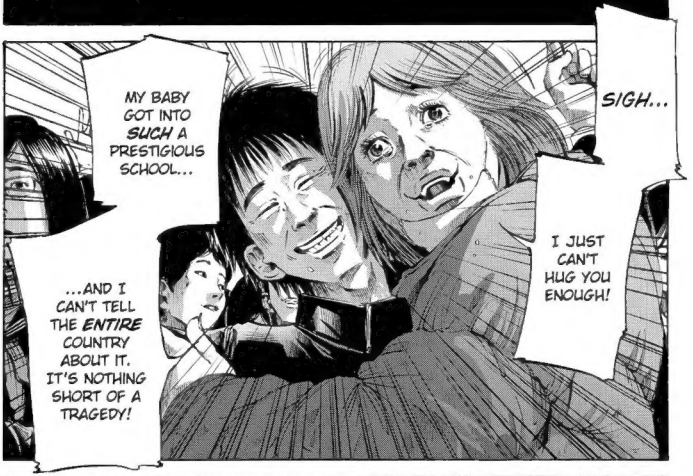
Chapter 56 195

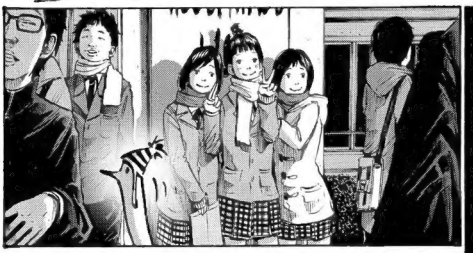
Chapter 47



High School
#1
ACCEPTANCE LISTS

Punpun wasn't particularly excited.


MY BABY GOT INTO *SUCH* A PRESTIGIOUS SCHOOL...
...AND I CAN'T TELL THE *ENTIRE* COUNTRY ABOUT IT. IT'S NOTHING SHORT OF A TRAGEDY!
SIGH...
I JUST CAN'T HUG YOU ENOUGH!

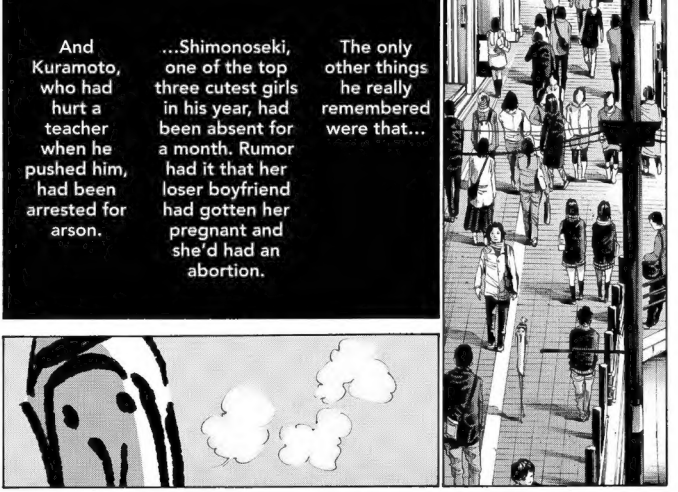


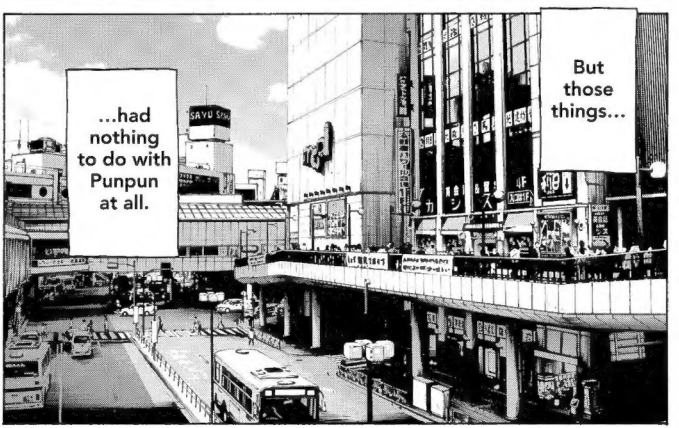
Punpun knew...

...his achievement was just the inevitable outcome of relentlessly studying.

His memories of the last two years...

...were nothing but equations and English grammar, written in his notebook or on the blackboard.

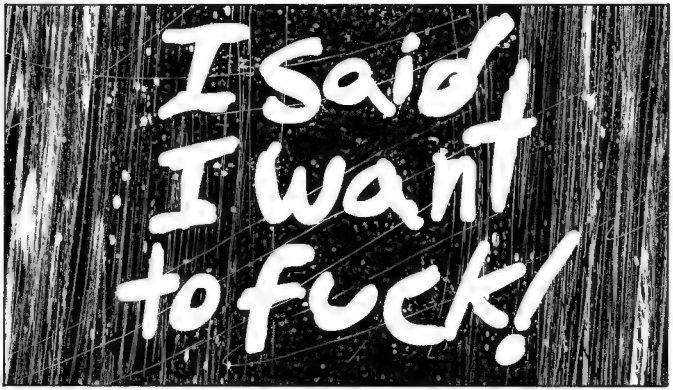

The only other things he really remembered were that...
...Shimonoseki, one of the top three cutest girls in his year, had been absent for a month. Rumor had it that her loser boyfriend had gotten her pregnant and she'd had an abortion.
And Kuramoto, who had hurt a teacher when he pushed him, had been arrested for arson.


But those things...
...had nothing to do with Punpun at all.

Right now, Punpun...
...had only one thought.

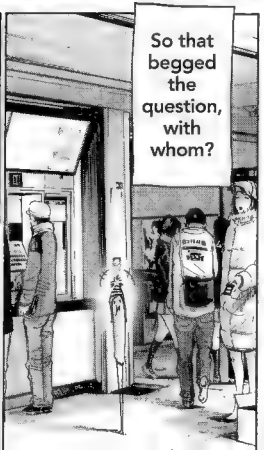
"I want to have sex."

"I want to **fuck.**"



Because of the springlike weather, the whole town seemed to be in a good mood...

...and frankly, Punpun was a little sick of it.

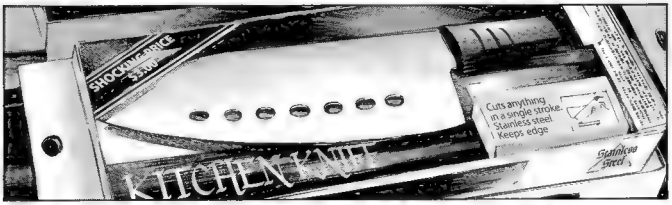


...felt like he was hollow inside.

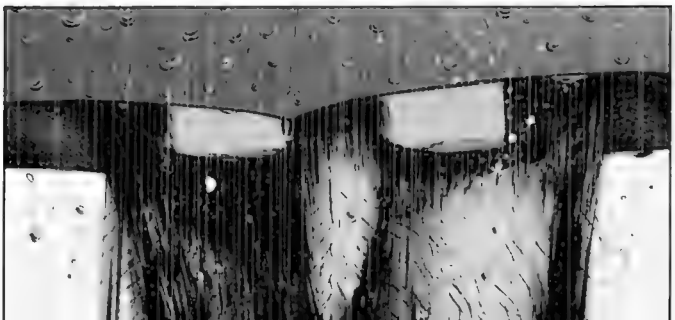
HMMM...
...SO YOU GOT IN.
ENROLMENT FORMS
YOU...
...REALLY ARE SMART.

HYAH HA!
WELL THEN...
...CONGRATULATIONS!
DO YOU WANT TO GO DEVOUR SOME NOT-REVOLTING SUSHI?

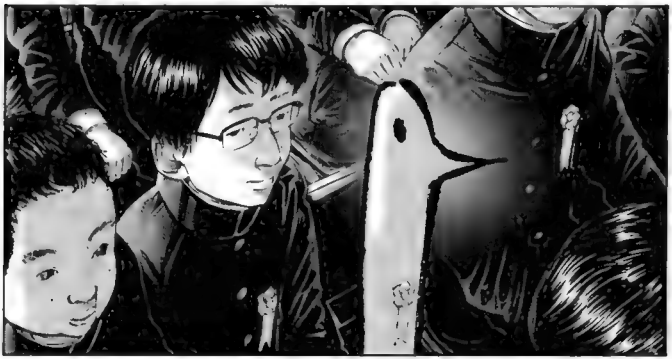
OH...
HI, PUNPUN.
WOW, YOU GOT IN.
ENROLLMENT FORMS
THAT'S AMAZING! CONGRATULATIONS.
WE HAVE TO CELEBRATE.
In spring...
... Punpun would be a high school student.

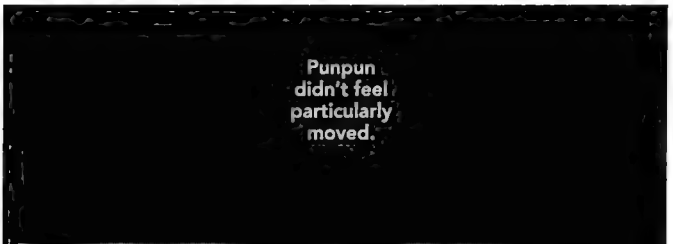

SHOCKING PRICE
$ 3.00
KITCHEN KNIFE
Cuts anything
in a single stroke.
Stainless steel
Keeps edge
Stainless Steel

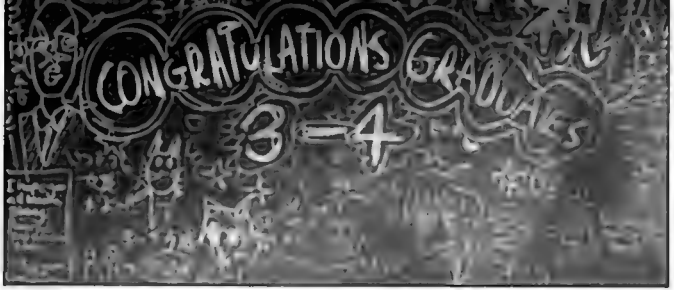
★ Chapter 48 ★

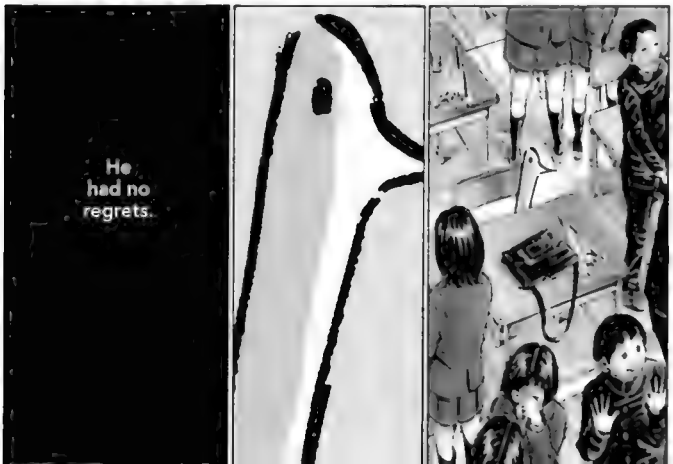


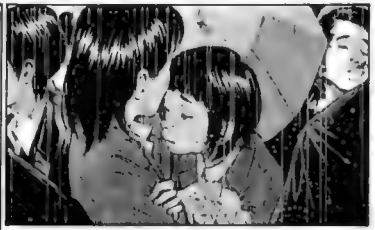
GRADUATION

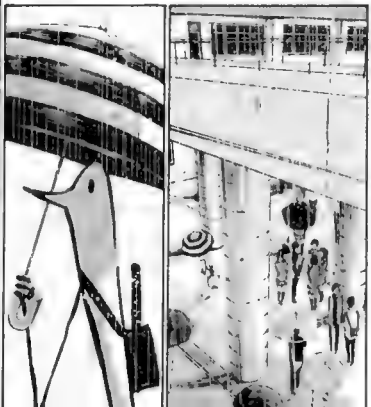


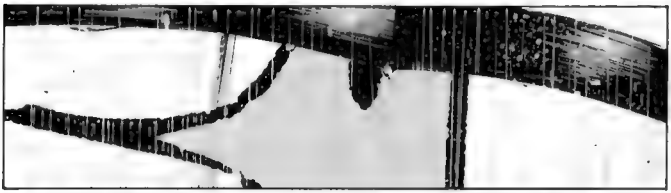

Punpun
didn't feel
particularly
moved.


CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES
3-4

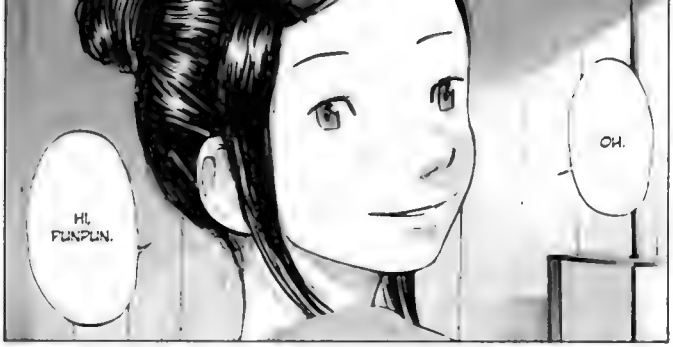

He had no regrets.







ZSSH


HI, PUNPUN.
OH.

STAY AND RELAX. I HAVE CHOCOLATE CAKE.
GRADUATION CEREMONY OVER?

IT WENT BY IN A FLASH ...
CONGRAT-ULATIONS.
...DIDN'T IT?

OPENING THIS PLACE HAS HAD ME IN SUCH A STATE THIS PAST YEAR...
...BUT IT'S BEEN FUN.
YOU'RE MOVING NEXT WEEK...
YOU HAVE TO PACK YOUR THINGS SOON, PUNPUN! YOU'RE SO LAID-BACK.
WE'VE DECIDED TO SEND YUICHI'S STUFF TO YOUR GRAND-PARENTS' HOUSE IN OFUNA.
I'M THINKING ABOUT MOVING BACK HOME TO THINK THINGS THROUGH ...
...BUT, PUNPUN, I CAN GET TO THE CAFÉ AND YOUR NEW PLACE REALLY EASILY BY BIKE.
SO I CAN SEE YOUR MOM...
...AND YOU...
...ANY TIME I WANT.

IT'S NOT...

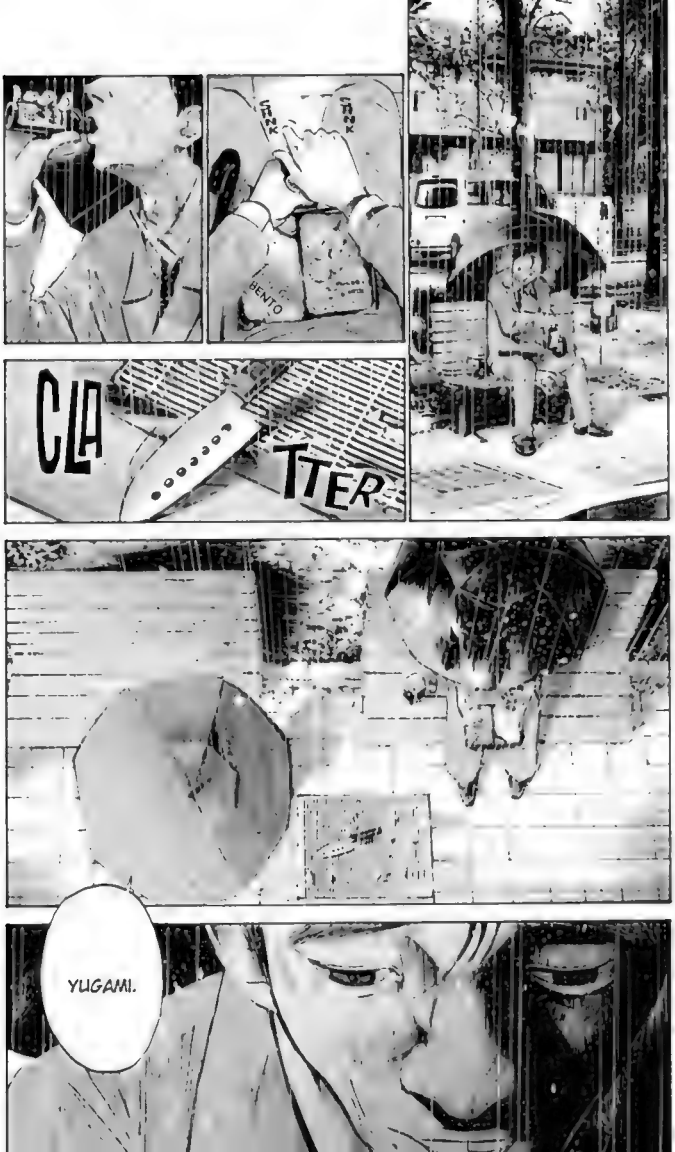
...IT'S NOT A MATTER OF...
... DISTANCE, YOU KNOW.

SORRY.
I'M SORRY, I...

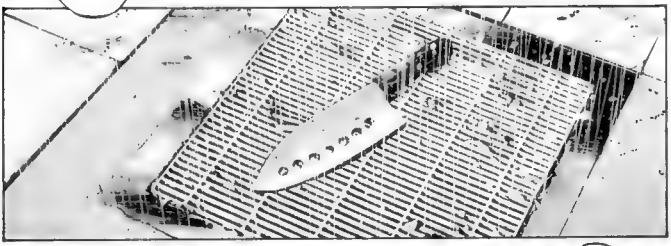
UMM...
WE READ ABOUT THIS PLACE IN A MAGAZINE ...
OH, YES!
THANK YOU FOR COMING.
PLEASE HAVE A SEAT WHEREVER YOU LIKE.
NO POINT...
...FEELING DOWN.
I HAVE TO WORK HARD RIGHT NOW.
THIS IS MY DREAM FINALLY COME TRUE.
ALL RIGHT!
...I'M FEELING BETTER NOW.
PUNPUN, LEND ME A HAND WHEN YOU FINISH EATING, OKAY?

BOOTH
1h

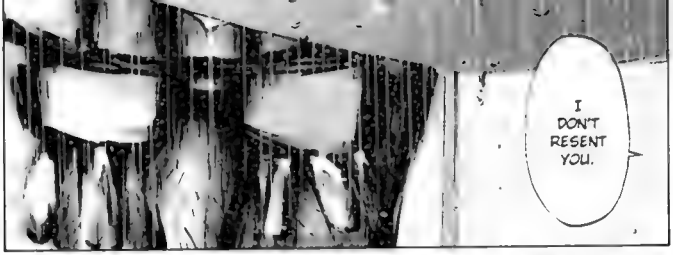
Yup
DANCO
DANCO
Yup
yup
DANCO

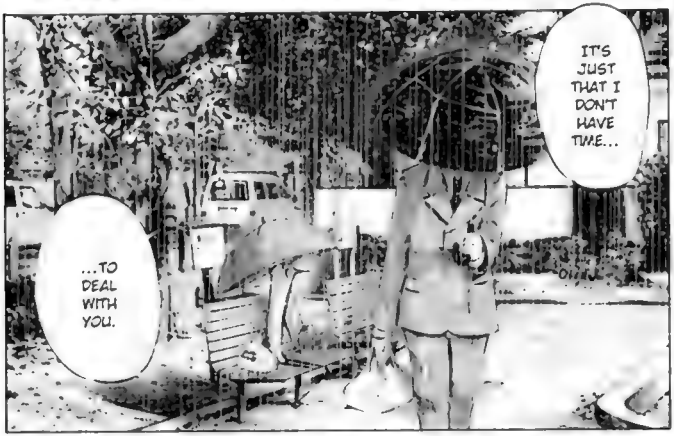

SHINK
SHINK
BENTO
CLA
TTER
YUGAMI.

REALLY.
DO WHAT YOU WANT WITH ME!
WHATEVER MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER.

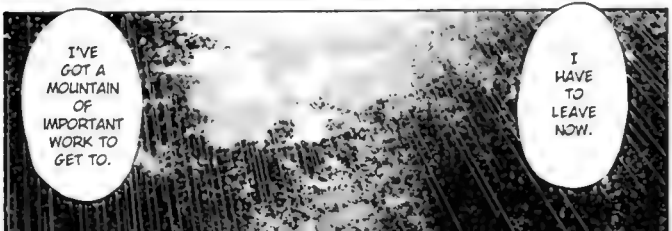


ONO-DERA.
THAT ISN'T THE PROBLEM, IS IT?


I DON'T RESENT YOU.

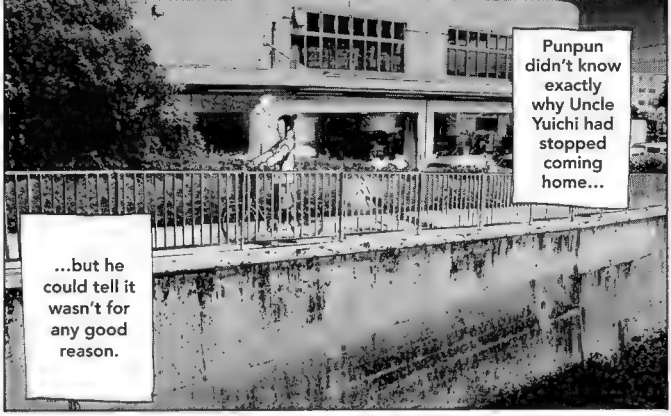

IT'S JUST THAT I DON'T HAVE TIME...
...TO DEAL WITH YOU.

UNLESS IT'S FOR BUSINESS, OF COURSE.


I'VE GOT A MOUNTAIN OF IMPORTANT WORK TO GET TO.
I HAVE TO LEAVE NOW.

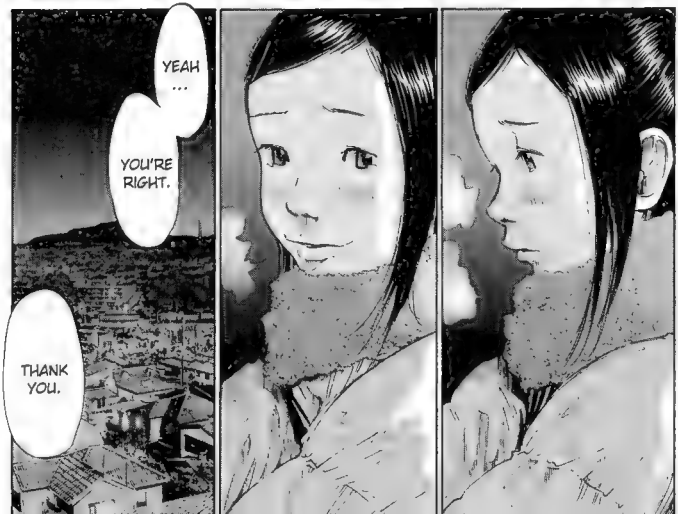
OH, THE RAIN STOPPED!
LOOK, PUNPUN ...
LOOK HOW GORGEOUS THE STARS ARE.

YOU KNOW, WHEN I WAS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, I WAS IN THE ASTRONOMY CLUB.
WHAT A GEEK, RIGHT?
BUT EVEN NOW, I LOVE LOOKING AT THE STARS.
'CAUSE AS LONG AS I'M LOOKING AT THEM...
Frankly...
...the only thing Punpun was thinking about...
...was how bad his eye-sight had gotten in the last two years.
But his heart chafed with irritation that he couldn't find the words to comfort Midori.
... REALITY JUST FADES AWAY.



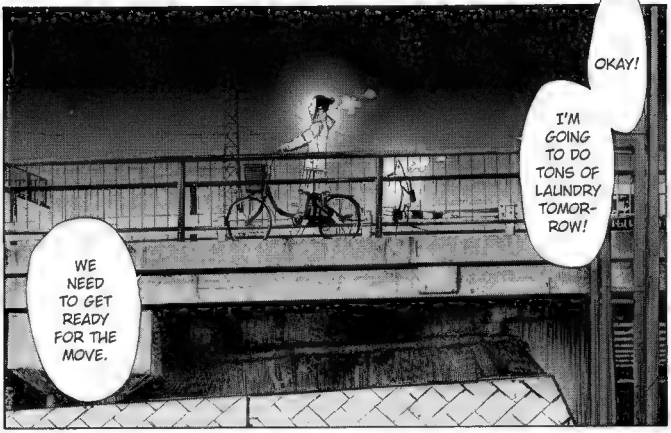
"I'm sure Uncle Yuichi will be home soon."

That was all he could manage to say for now.



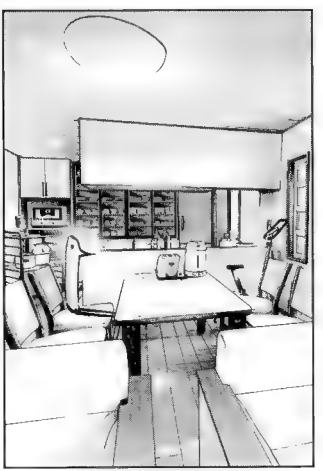
"...and pretending **not** to know was mature...

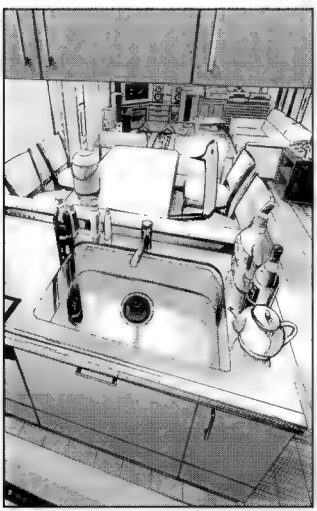
"If pretending to know everything was childish...



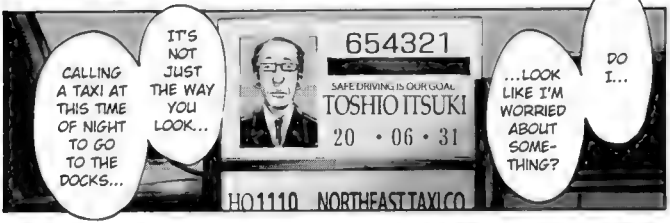
...thought Punpun.

"...then I must still be a child..."





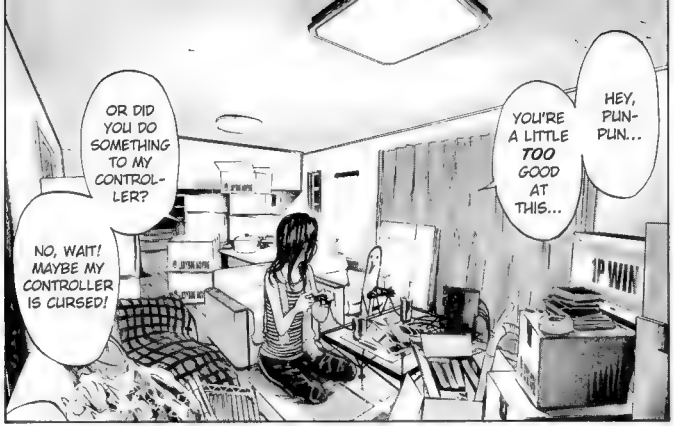
HEY...
...IF SOMETHING'S WEIGHING ON YOUR MIND...
...YOU COULD TELL ME ABOUT IT. IF YOU WANT.

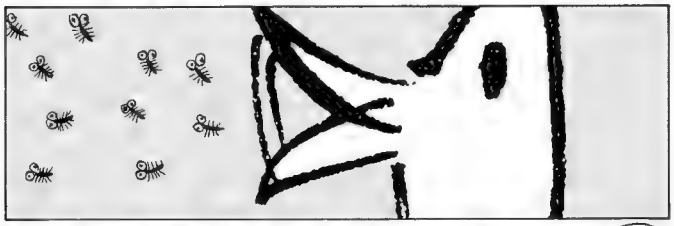

DO I...
...LOOK LIKE I'M WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING?
IT'S NOT JUST THE WAY YOU LOOK...
CALLING A TAXI AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT TO GO TO THE DOCKS...
654321
SAFE DRIVING IS OUR GOAL
TOSHIO ITSUKI
20 • 06 • 31
HO1110 NORTHEAST TAXI CO.

I HAD AN AFFAIR.

OH...
...SO YOU'VE GONE AND DONE IT.
YES, I DID.

OHHH ...
WHOA, WHOA.
W-W-WAIT...
OH, DARN.
I LOST AGAIN.


HEY, PUN-PUN...
YOU'RE A LITTLE TOO GOOD AT THIS...
OR DID YOU DO SOMETHING TO MY CONTROL-LER?
NO, WAIT! MAYBE MY CONTROLLER IS CURSED!
1P WIN



NO, I'M NOT TEN YEARS TOO LATE TO TAKE YOU ON!
WHAT A SASS-MOUTH!
LET'S GO AGAIN.
SHE WAS IN HER THIRTIES, MARRIED, AND COMING TO MY POTTERY CLASS.

HER HUSBAND FOUND OUT ABOUT IT, AND NOW THEY'RE GETTING A DIVORCE.
HE'S SAYING HE SUFFERED EMOTIONAL DISTRESS...
...AND HE'S DEMANDING $200,000 IN DAMAGES.

IT'S NOT AN EXCUSE ...
...BUT I OVERESTIMATED THE STRENGTH OF MY MORAL FIBER.
I WAS IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP, AND I WAS CONVINCED I'D NEVER STRAY.

SHE WAS ...
...A FREAK IN THE SHEETS, WASN'T SHE?
BUT...
SHE WAS SCARY FREAKY!

BUT NOW MY SISTER'S SAYING SHE'LL SELL HER HOUSE AND LEND ME THE MONEY.
IF I USE THE MONEY I'VE BEEN SAVING TO GET MARRIED, I CAN JUST ABOUT PAY THE $200,000.
WELL...
...NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO, THEN.
WHAT A NICE SISTER.
SHE'S SPONTA-NEOUS AND RUDE AND...
...FREE.
I'VE ALWAYS LOOKED DOWN ON HER.
...WOULD BE SO PAINFUL.
I NEVER THOUGHT GETTING SYMPATHY FROM HER...

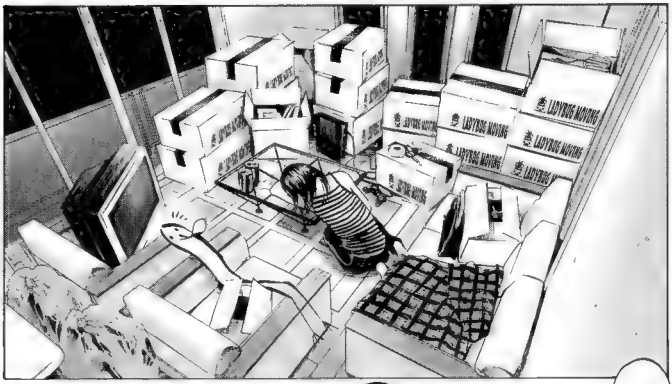
I JUST WANTED HIS OPINION, AS A FRIEND.
IT'S NOT LIKE I WAS GOING TO GET LITIGIOUS.
...IS A LAWYER. HE'S KIND AND GREAT AT HIS JOB.
MY ONLY FRIEND...

THAT'S TERRIBLE!
BUT HE'S YOUR FRIEND ...
BUT HE WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME.
I SAW HIM TWICE, BUT HE WOULD BARELY TALK TO ME.
NO...
I BROUGHT IT ON MYSELF.

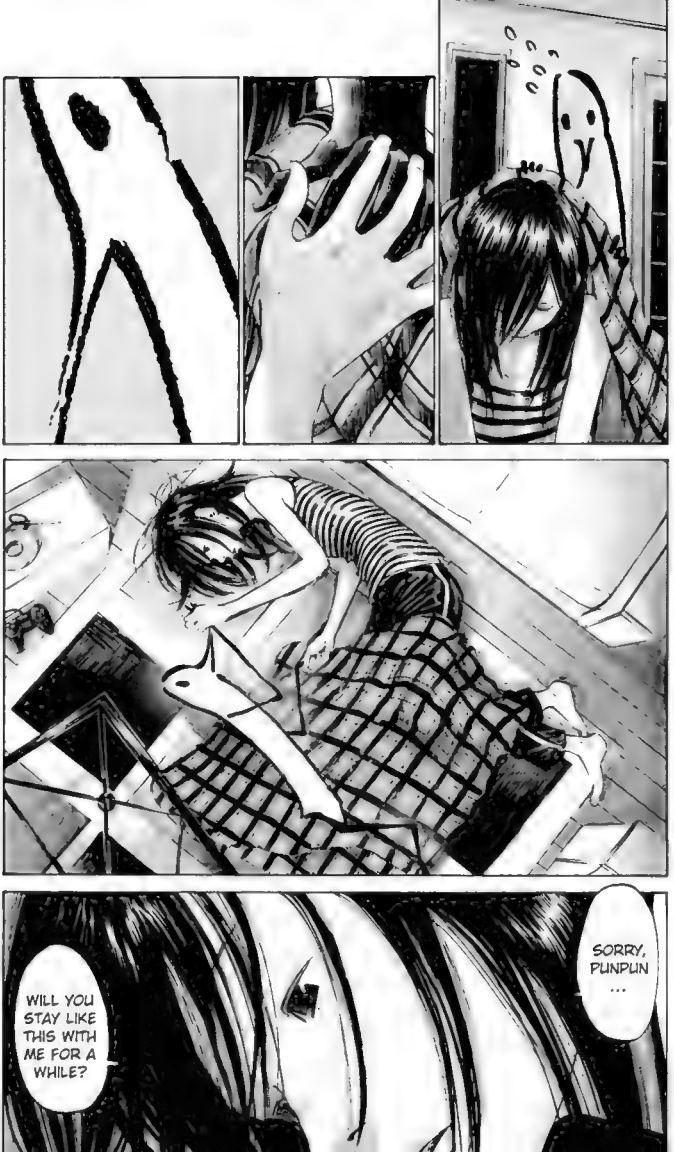
MY LAWYER FRIEND...
...LIKED SOMEONE.
CLAK
CLAK
YUP
I KNEW ABOUT IT...
...BUT I STILL SNUCK IN AND STOLE HER.

SHE'S ...
...MY GIRLFRIEND NOW.
UNTIL THIS WHOLE THING BLEW UP...
...I'D BEEN HIDING IT FROM HIM.

BUT ONCE HE KNEW, HE DIDN'T EVEN GET ANGRY WITH ME.
HE DIDN'T SAY A WORD, JUST LOOKED DOWN.
THAT WORDLESS EXCHANGE ...
...WAS UNBEARABLY PAINFUL.
Go for real this summer.


LADYBUG MOVING

OH...
YUICHI MIGHT COME HOME...
...AND HE...
...HATES WHEN THE LIGHT'S OFF.
THAT'S OKAY, PUNPUN. LEAVE THE LIGHT ON.

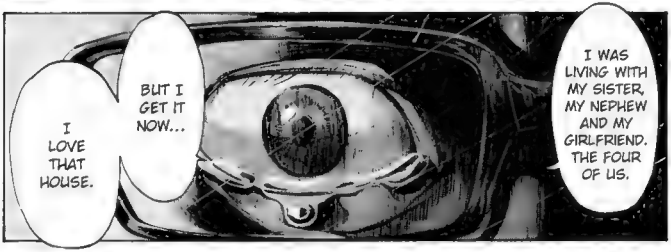

SORRY, PUNPUN ...
WILL YOU STAY LIKE THIS WITH ME FOR A WHILE?

I PROMISED MY GIRL-FRIEND ONE THING WHEN WE STARTED GOING OUT.
IT'S FUNNY ...

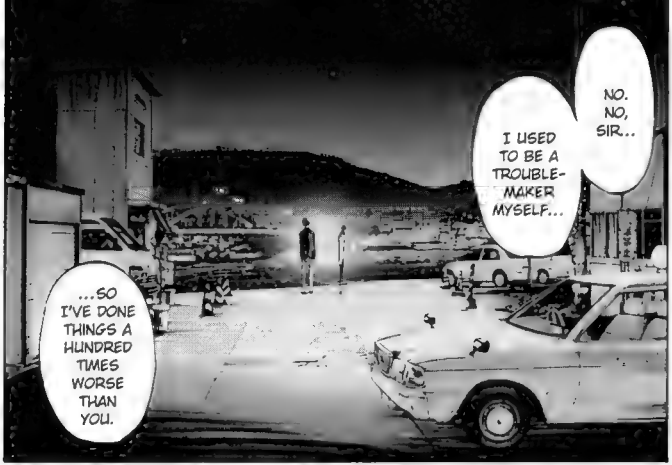
"IF I EVER REALLY HURT YOU...
"...JUST KILL ME."

BUT...
...SHE DIDN'T KILL ME.
SHE ...
SHE FORGAVE ME.

THAT...
THAT WAS THE HARDEST PART OF ALL.


I WAS LIVING WITH MY SISTER, MY NEPHEW AND MY GIRLFRIEND. THE FOUR OF US.
BUT I GET IT NOW...
I LOVE THAT HOUSE.

I HATE MYSELF...
...BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE TOO KIND.


NO. NO, SIR...
I USED TO BE A TROUBLE-MAKER MYSELF...
...SO I'VE DONE THINGS A HUNDRED TIMES WORSE THAN YOU.

IF I HADN'T MARRIED MY MISSUS, I WOULD'VE BEEN...
...DEAD IN A DITCH A LONG TIME AGO.

OF COURSE, I GAVE HER LOADS OF TROUBLE TOO.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO REPAY KINDNESS IMMEDI-ATELY.
YOU CAN PAY IT BACK SLOWLY.
SHE NEVER SAID ANYTHING, BUT I KNEW SHE WAS MY DESTINY.

HERE, LET ME GIVE YOU THIS.
THERE ARE CHANCES EVERY-WHERE.
... BUT... WHERE DO I EVEN START?
YOU'LL NEVER FIND A TAXI WAY OUT HERE.
JHIO ITSUKI
OH NO... BUT...
...I...
THE ONLY THING YOU'LL GET STARING AT THE OCEAN IS A COLD.
I'LL COME GET YOU WHEN-EVER YOU'RE READY.
THAT'S OKAY— I HAVE LOTS OF TIME...

EVENTUALLY YOU'LL GO HOME.
OF COURSE YOU WILL.
THERE'S SOMEONE WAITING FOR YOU.

I'M NOT A PHILOSOPHER...
...BUT I THINK WHAT A SINNER REALLY NEEDS ISN'T PUNISHMENT.
IT'S TO UNDERSTAND THE PAIN OF BEING FORGIVEN.

MY MISSUS...
...PASSED AWAY LAST MONTH.
I HAVE ONE REGRET.

AT HER DEATH-BED...
...I COULDN'T SAY "THANK YOU."
MAYBE YOU...
...HAVE SOMETHING YOU NEED TO FINISH TOO?

...and the night blurred into a translucent dawn.

...Uncle Yuichi didn't come home...

In the end...

JUST ONCE...
...I'D LOVE TO BE PURSUED BY A SWEATY, MUSCULAR MAN.
REALLY?
THIS HOUSE SEEMS PRETTY BIG WITHOUT ANY FURNITURE.
WHY DON'T WE ALL TAKE A PICTURE BY THE FRONT DOOR BEFORE WE GO?

Punpun was remembering everything that had happened in the house, from the first day they'd moved in until today.
NO WAY!
SO CORNY!
EXCUSE ME, MA'AM!
WE'VE FINISHED LOADING ALL YOUR THINGS, SO CAN WE GET A CONFIRMATION SIGNATURE, PLEASE?

That New Year's Eve when Uncle Yuichi got chicken pox and made a huge fuss...

...and when Midori watched a drama rerun and couldn't stop crying and they all laughed at her.

Like when he watched the night game with his dad...

...and the morning his mom banged around with a toothache and broke a window.

... thought Punpun.

"Days go by without us knowing why..."

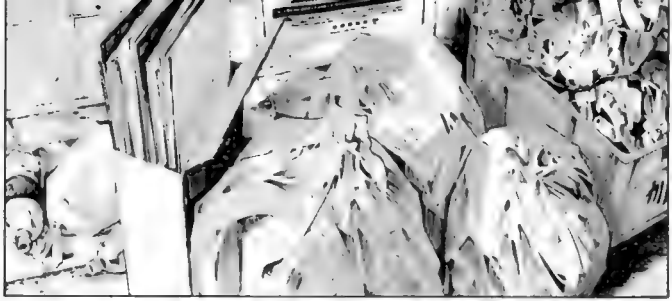
...and ages ago.

...like it had happened yesterday...

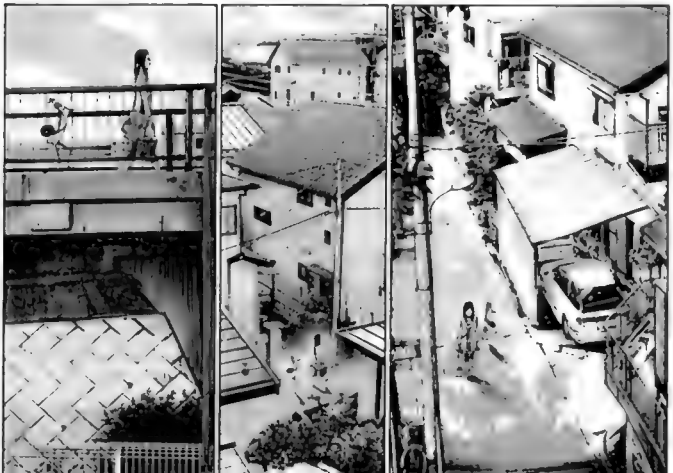
It all seemed...

OKAY ...
...I'LL HEAD OVER TO THE NEW PLACE WITH THE MOVERS.
WILL YOU AND PUNPUN STAY BEHIND AND TAKE CARE OF THE TRASH AND ALL THAT?

UMM, SIS...
WHAT?
IS IT OKAY ...
...IF I CALL YOU SOME-TIMES?
I'M SORRY ...
JUST ONE!
LET'S JUST TAKE ONE PHOTO OF US TOGETHER.



WELL, IT'S A LITTLE EARLY, BUT...



BEAUTY AS IS
PRINT

AND THEN I HAVE TO GO TO THE EYEGLASS STORE, AND I WANT TO HAVE A PEEK IN THE HARDWARE STORE...
OH, AND IS IT OKAY IF WE STOP AT THE BOOK-STORE?
YOU KNOW, THERE'S A COLLEGE NEAR MY CAFÉ...
...SO I'M THINKING ABOUT SERVING LUNCH TOO.
BUT I ALREADY HAVE MY HANDS FULL, SO I'M A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT PULLING IT OFF ON MY OWN.

OH, THAT'S IT!
WOULD YOU COME HELP ME OUT, PUNPUN?
IT WOULD ONLY BE DURING SPRING BREAK.
WHAT?
WHAT WAS THAT, PUNPUN? THAT'S A LITTLE FLIPPANT, DON'T YOU THINK?
SURE, IF YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO IT, YOU CAN DO ANY-THING...

WHAT?
SEE...
OH...
...YU...
YUICHI!
SEIYO

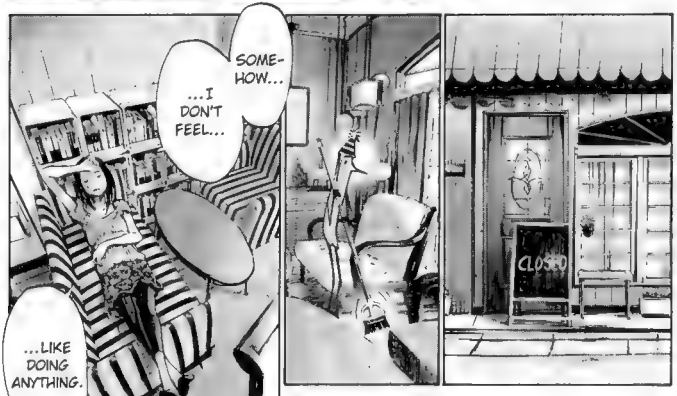
24 HR.
SEIYO

OH ...
...I'M SO SORRY.
COM-PLETELY THE WRONG PERSON.
I will tell you the future!!
—Tochiki

THE TIME...
Pharmacy
I will tell you the future!!
-Taka.
...IS NEAR!

MAYBE I WALKED TOO MUCH.
UM ...
...I'M OKAY.

CLOSED

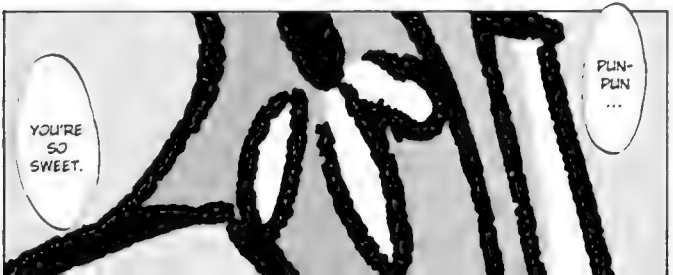

SOME-
HOW...
...I
DON'T
FEEL...
...LIKE
DOING
ANYTHING.
CLOSED

OH YEAH, REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE HERE EATING CAKE...
...AND THOSE TWO CUSTOMERS CAME IN?
THEY'RE EDITORS OF A MAGAZINE ...
THEY'RE GOING TO DO A WRITE-UP OF THE CAFÉ.
BUT I JUST CAN'T WORK UP ANY EXCITEMENT ABOUT IT.
BEFORE, I WOULD'VE BEEN JUMPING UP AND DOWN, COMPLETELY ECSTATIC.
OH, PUNPUN, DON'T LOOK SO GLUM.
YOU HAVE A BAD HABIT OF BEING SUSCEPTIBLE TO OTHER PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS.
SMILE.
I SAID, SMILE!

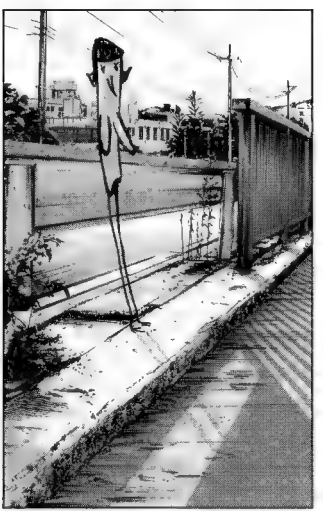
THAT WAS TERRIBLE.
UGH ...
I HATE EVERY-THING.

I'M SORRY.
I'M JUST TAKING IT OUT ON YOU.
THIS SUCKS SO MUCH.
SOB ...
SOB!
SOB...

PAT PAT PAT PAT


PUN-PUN ...
YOU'RE SO SWEET.

HEY...
COME HERE.



YOU KNOW ...
YUICHI WAS HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH SOME MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN.
HE ENDED UP HAVING TO PAY $200,000 BECAUSE OF IT. WHAT AN IDIOT.
CLOSED
CLOSED

NO MATTER HOW HE TRIES TO SPIN IT...
...HE'S JUST A PLAYER.
I KNEW THAT...
I WAS PREPARED TO GIVE HIM ONE MORE CHANCE.

BUT ...
...HE RAN AWAY AGAIN.
HE HASN'T MATURED AT ALL.

I COULDN'T CHANGE HIM.
THAT'S THE SADDEST THING.
OR MAYBE NOT.

MAYBE...
...I WAS JUST FRUS-TRATED...
...AND WANTED TO DRIVE HIM INTO A CORNER IN THE MOST PAINFUL WAY.
MAYBE EVEN NOW...
...I'M JUST THINKING UP WAYS TO TORMENT HIM.
SORRY...
WHAT AM I SAYING?
HEH HEH...
I DON'T KNOW ANYMORE.
I DON'T EVEN UNDER-STAND MYSELF...
BUT...
...I THOUGHT I WAS ALL MATURE, LIKE I COULD UNDERSTAND PEOPLE.

PUNPUN ...
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS MOST IMPOR-TANT?
WHAT'S THE ONE THING YOU BELIEVE IN?
THE THING THAT, IF YOU LOSE SIGHT OF IT...
...YOU LOSE YOUR-SELF TOO?
I FINALLY GET IT NOW...
FOR ME, ACHIEVING MY DREAM WAS JUST A CHECK-POINT.
I REALLY LOVED...
...THE FOUR OF US LIVING TOGETHER

PUNPUN...
TRY AND GET ALONG BETTER WITH YOUR MOM, OKAY?
SHE'S PRICKLY...
...BUT SHE'S ALSO REALLY LONELY.

I WONDER WHAT KIND OF ADULT YOU'LL BECOME, PUNPUN.
I'M ACTUALLY KIND OF WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

SORRY...
JUST A LITTLE BIT...

...OKAY?

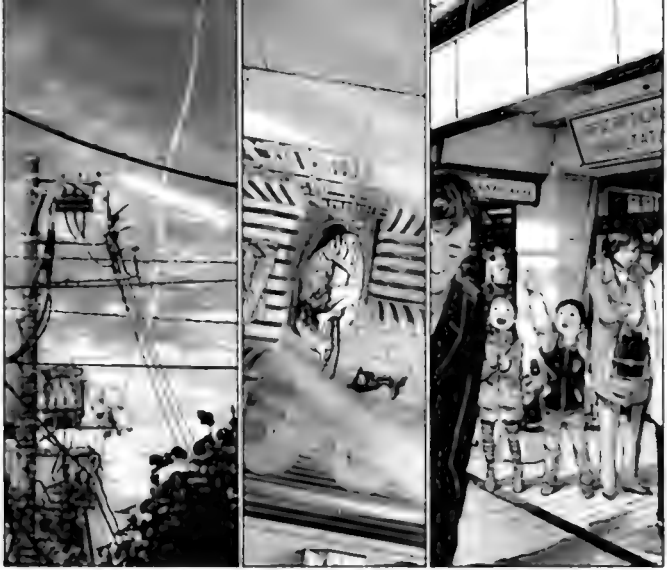
NO?

JUST A LITTLE BIT...
DON'T MOVE...

OH...

MMFF
...

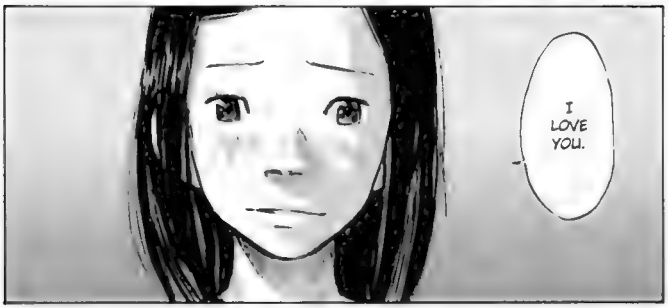
AAAH
...



OH...
THAT'S A CONGRATULATION GIFT FOR GETTING INTO HIGH SCHOOL.

SUPER BOARDS

PUNPUN ...
ARE YOU LEAVING?


I LOVE YOU.

SEE YOU..
...SOON.

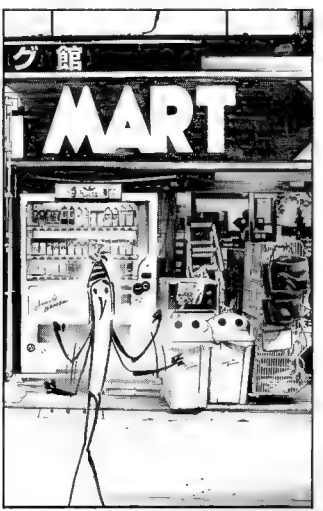
...and softly closed the door.

Punpun didn't say a thing...

So he kept quiet.

...Punpun felt like he'd lose too many important things. That they'd just disappear.

If he uttered even a single word...


グ館
MART

...like he understood all the secrets of mankind.

In that instant, Punpun had felt...

Then you go all shaky!

Mmm ...

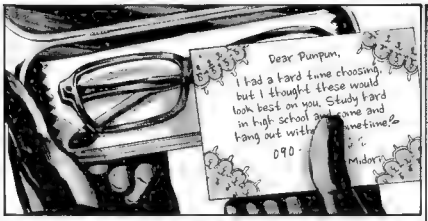
Gasp!

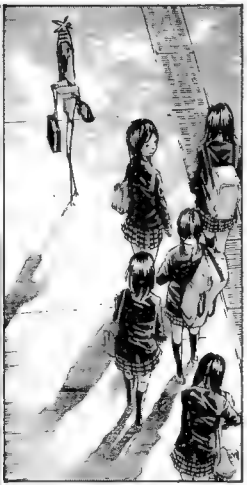
Then you float a little!

Then you clench!

All slimy!

So you go all slimy!

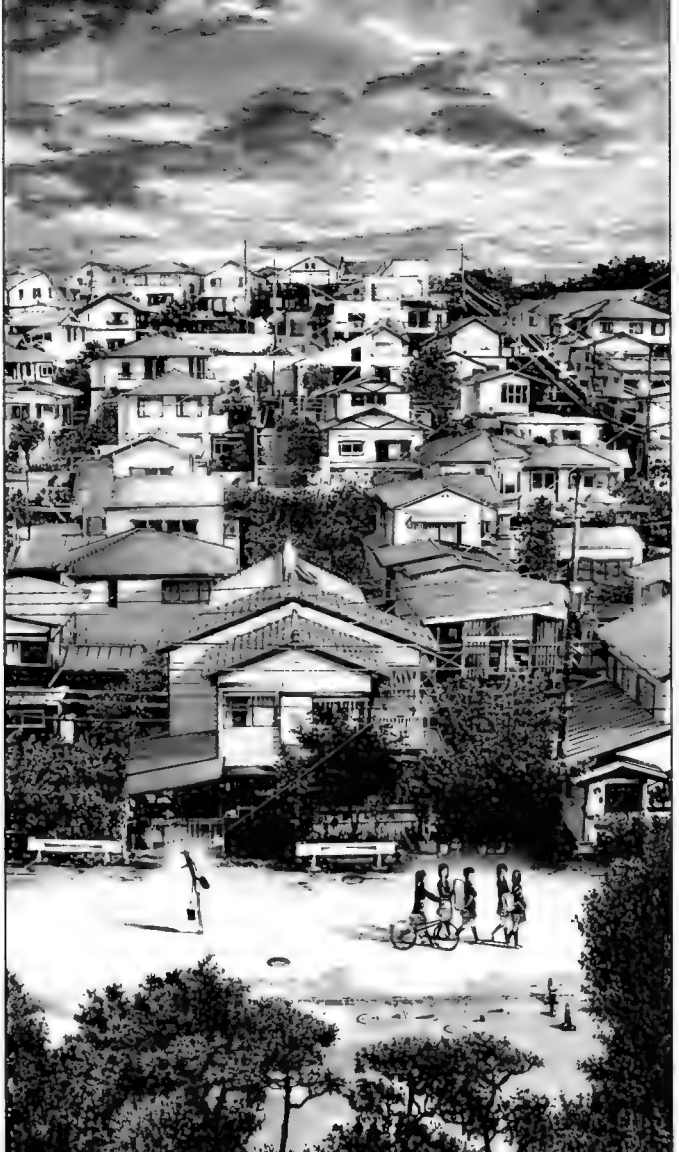

Dear Punpun,
I had a hard time choosing, but I thought these would look best on you. Study hard in high school and...
...metime?
Midori



But instead, Punpun's head was empty.

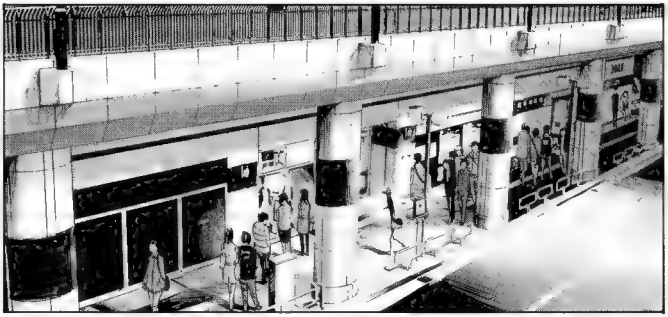
Just like the sky after a typhoon.

Or that was what was **supposed** to happen.



Punpun was a little indignant at how selfish it was being.

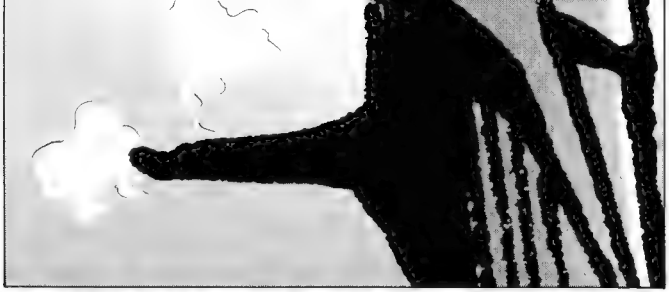
The sun was brazenly painting the sky red.



...and so it ended up just wavering.

...Punpun's ever-growing shadow had nowhere left to go...

With the sun thoughtlessly pushing against his back...



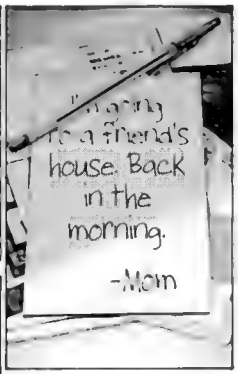
Punpun asked his shadow.

"What are you doing?"

...and slowly seeped into Punpun's heart.

The question fluttered futilely through the air...

803 ONODERA


...to a friend's
house. Back
in the
morning.
-Mom

"TO KAGOSHIMA!"
"SO LET'S JUST GO NOW.

...Punpun thought, maybe there was somewhere else.
Instead of this boring, stupid place...
Somewhere far away, where he was supposed to be.
...what he was doing or why he was there.
Punpun no longer knew...

Either that...

...or dead.

From now on, whatever happened, Punpun wouldn't rely on anyone else. He'd have a good life all by himself.

Oh yeah?

Punpun hangs in there! He isn't the sort to give up in the face of adversity!

No, that's **not** right!

He's got character!

He's an intellectual!

Huh.

...was going to have a good life.

Punpun...

PHWAAAARR

HEE HEE HEE HEE
LIGHTS ON

DEAD

HOTEL DOLPHIN KICK
Rent $49 and up
Mon-Fri
Discount Hours
1AM-2PM
12PM-10PM
Sat, Sun, holidays
Discount Hours
1AM-2PM
10AM-1PM
Stay $79 and up
Mon-Fri, Sun, holidays
Discount Hours
5PM-12PM
1AM-2PM
Fri, Sat, days before holidays
5PM-10AM
1AM-12PM

SO, I'M IN MY FORTIES NOW...
I CAN SEE OLD AGE PEEKING AROUND THE CORNER.
BABY ...
...AT LEAST PUT SOME CLOTHES ON.
I SOLD THE HOUSE, AND I HAVE A LITTLE MONEY NOW, BUT IT'S JUST TEMPORARY.
I HAVE NO INTEREST IN STAYING IN THIS PATHETIC LIFE.
OH, WHAT'S WITH THAT LOOK?!
STOP IT.
DID YOU THINK I WAS GOING TO SAY "LEAVE YOUR WIFE"?!
DON'T LUMP ME TOGETHER WITH ALL THOSE OTHER STUPID WOMEN.

OF COURSE NOT.
NO WAY YOU COULD FIT IN A BOX LIKE THAT.
I REALLY LIKE HOW YOU LIVE...
...ON YOUR OWN SO COMPE-TENTLY.
NEVER MIND...
...I'M GOING HOME.
PACHINKO
GAME
RENTALS
CD・ビデオ・DVD
STUDIO
DANCE STUDIO
1week
ALL YOU CAN DRINK
お食事処

TAKEYA
AAAARGH!
I HOPE THE ENTIRE PLANET JUST DISAPPEARS TOMORROW!
SHLUK
SHLUK
SHLUK
SHLUK
SHLUK
SHLUK
SHLUK
SHLUK
SHLUK

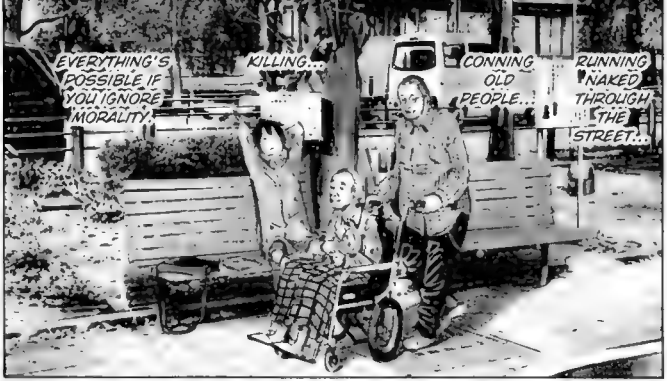
Chapter 52

I'M BORED.
...SO I'M THINKING ABOUT MORE INANITIES THAN USUAL.
IT'S STUPID SUNNY TODAY...

PEOPLE ARE FREE.
WELL, THEY CAN'T FLY ON THEIR OWN...
...BUT PRETTY MUCH WHATEVER THEY CAN THINK UP, THEY CAN MAKE HAPPEN.

WHEN THEY'RE SLEEPY, THEY CAN SLEEP.

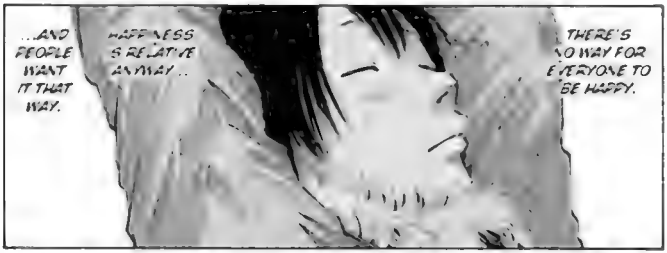
AND THE ONLY REASON THEY DON'T IS BECAUSE THINGS LIKE SOCIAL NORMS, LAWS, TRADITIONS AND SENTIMENT GET IN THE WAY.
THEY'RE FREE TO START OR QUIT WHATEVER THEY'RE DOING WHENEVER THEY WANT.


EVERYTHING'S POSSIBLE IF YOU IGNORE MORALITY.
KILLING...
CONNING OLD PEOPLE...
RUNNING NAKED THROUGH THE STREET...

TRYING TO LIVE WITH THAT CONTRADICTION IS TORTURE.
THAT'S WHY THEY INSIST ON TEACHING YOU COOPERATION AND ETHICS WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG.
BUT, IN SO MANY PLACES, HAPPINESS AND SORROW ARE TRADED LIKE STOCKS ON WALL STREET.
BUT, THE WORLD IS SET UP TO FORCE PEOPLE TO FIGHT, CHEAT AND STEAL AS A DEFAULT.

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR EVERY-ONE TO BE HAPPY?

THE WORLD IS THE EMPTY MEAT OF HUMAN NATURE EXPOSED...
THEY'RE JUST OLD MEN WHO HAVE TO DANCE TO PUBLIC OPINION.
I'D HATE TO TRUST THE ENTIRE THING TO POLITICIANS.
BUT IF A KID COULD FIGURE IT OUT, WAR WOULD'VE GONE EXTINCT A LONG TIME AGO.
WHO KNOWS?


...AND PEOPLE WANT IT THAT WAY.
HAPPINESS IS RELATIVE ANYWAY...
THERE'S NO WAY FOR EVERYONE TO BE HAPPY.

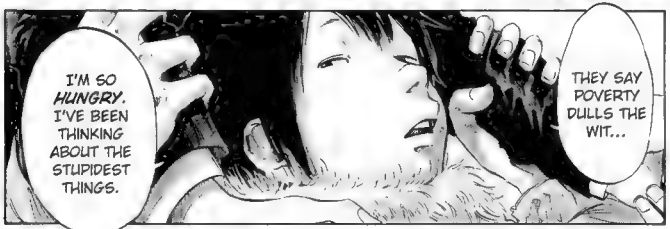
IT'S THE SAME THING.
PEOPLE GO TO WAR TO PROTECT ICN AND COUNTRY.
AND IT GETS HELD UP AS RATIONAL...
IN ORDER TO PROTECT HER CHILD, A MOTHER CAN TURN INTO A DEMON.
EVIL IS RELATIVE TOO.

...THAT THEY NEVER EVEN CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY'RE CULPABLE FOR THEIR OWN PROBLEMS.
PEOPLE HAVE BECOME SO ADEPT AT EXCUSES AND SHIFTING THE BLAME...
WHY?
IT'S AMAZING THAT NO ONE KNOWS THAT.
EVEN IF YOU PRETEND TO BE GOOD, FUNDAMENTALLY, EVERYONE HAS SOME NEGATIVE ASPECTS.

I DON'T WANT TO TAKE ORDERS, BUT I DON'T WANT TO HASSLE ANYONE EITHER.
I DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING...
GUESS WHO?
SO WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING?
ME, AS AN INDIVIDUAL.
NO MATTER WHAT I THINK, IT WON'T CHANGE THE WORLD EVEN A BIT.
WHAT AM I DOING?

WHAT I REALLY WANT RIGHT NOW...
IT'S A STARK CONCLUSION.
...BUT THE REALITY IS THAT I'M JUST A SUSPICIOUS-LOOKING GUY ON A BENCH.
I TELL MYSELF THAT PEOPLE ARE EFFECTIVELY FREE...
I JUST HANG AROUND HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY WITH NOTHING TO DO.
IN THE END, I'M JUST A LAZY BUM. I DON'T GO TO SCHOOL. I DON'T WORK.

I REALLY WANT...
...MONEY.


THEY SAY POVERTY DULLS THE WIT...
I'M SO *HUNGRY*. I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THE STUPIDEST THINGS.

SHIMIZU ...
...DO YOU HAVE ANY MONEY?
NOT VERY MUCH.
OH..
HEY, IT'S A SCHOOL DAY. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

WE HAD MIDTERMS TODAY. GOT OUT EARLY.
WOW, MIDTERMS ALREADY? SO YOU'RE DOING OKAY IN SCHOOL?
OF COURSE NOT...
YOU COME HANG OUT WITH ME WAY TOO MUCH.
SEKI..
...DID YOUR DAD COME HOME?

NOPE, NO SIGN OF HIM.
IF THIS ROUND OF FUND-RAISING DOESN'T WORK, THE COURTS MIGHT ACTUALLY TAKE OUR HOUSE THIS TIME.
THEN THE ENTIRE FAMILY WILL BE HOMELESS. HA HA HA!

...
YOU WANT TO WALK FOR A WHILE?
MAYBE SOMEONE DROPPED A WALLET.

HANDYMAN
WILL DO ANYTHING!
• MOVING • PEST CONTROL
• CLEANING • MOWING LAWNS
• JUNK HAULING • PAINTING
AND MORE! JUST ASK!
FREE ESTIMATE. JUST CALL!
TEL 27-...

HANDYMAN
SEKI, AREN'T YOU HOT IN THAT COAT?
SHI-MIZU ...

I NEED SOME-THING TO WRITE WITH.

DON'T DO THAT ...!
HANDYMAN
HEY, YOU PUT MY NUMBER.
W-WAIT...
W-WHOA, WHOA!
NDYMAN
DO ANYTHING!
• MOVING • PEST CONTROL
• CLEANING • MOWING LAWNS
• JUNK HAULING • PAINTING
Sauk
Sauk
Sauk
I DON'T HAVE A CELL PHONE.
SHUT UP.
SEKI, WHY DON'T YOU GET A REGULAR JOB?
YOU CAN MAKE BENTO AT HOME AND SELL THEM LIKE YOUR DAD DOES.
DON'T BE STUPID. YOU NEED A LICENSE AND WHATEVER TO SELL FOOD.
BESIDES, IF I GET ANYWHERE NEAR AN INDUSTRIAL STOVE, HE'LL PASS OUT.
UHM...
DO YOU GUYS HAVE A MINUTE?

ARE YOU BY ANY CHANCE...
...CHILDREN IN NEED OF MONEY?
WE ARE.
I HAVE...
...A JOB FOR YOU.
IT'S AT A PROPERTY WE MANAGE.
IT'S PRETTY MESSED UP, AND WE NEED HELP.

OH?
CLEAN-ING?
THAT'S NOT A PROBLEM AT ALL.
PROFES-SIONALS AREN'T CHEAP...
...BUT IT'S DEPRESSING WORKING ON IT BY MYSELF.

PEEP
PIRO LIRO
PIRO
PIRO

ISN'T THAT YOUR PHONE?
WHY AREN'T YOU ANSWER-ING?
HELLO?

I'LL DO PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING.
YEAH ...
... THAT'S RIGHT.
OH YEAH, I KNOW WHERE THAT IS.
WE SHOULD MEET TO DISCUSS THE TERMS, SO IF YOU WANT TO PICK A PLACE...
NO, TODAY IS FINE...
YOU CAN CLEAN BY YOURSELF, RIGHT?
HUH?
OKAY, I'M BORROWING YOUR PHONE.
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU BECAME INDEPENDENT.
WE'LL MEET AT THE PARK WHEN WE'RE DONE.

YOUR PARTNER IN TOWN
SHISHIDO REAL ESTATE
YOUR FRIEND IS VERY SELF-SERVING, ISN'T HE?

RESTAURANT
THE SOUTH WIND BLOWS

I WANT REVENGE.

I WROTE DOWN HIS DAILY SCHEDULE. IT'S IN THE ENVELOPE...
HERE'S YOUR FEE, PLUS EXTRA FOR EXPENSES.
...SO YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE FINDING HIM.

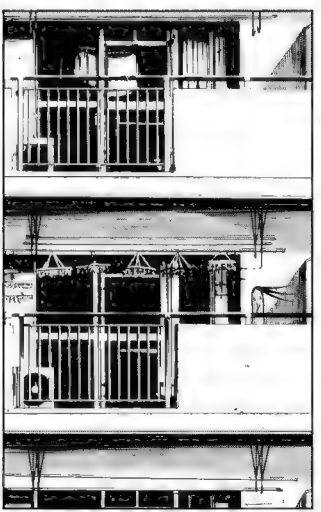
UMM...
SO THERE ARE DEGREES OF REVENGE.
BEATING HIM UP.
DIGGING UP SOME DIRT AND BLACKMAILING HIM.
PUSHING HIM OFF A ROOF.
I HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT SPECIFICS YET.
BUT IF POSSIBLE ...
...I WANT HIS LIFE TO BE SO MESSED UP...
...THAT HE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO RECOVER.
JUST OUT OF CURIOSITY ...
AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER IF YOU DON'T WANT TO...
BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS GUY?

A FORMER COL-LEAGUE ...
...AND AN EX-BOY-FRIEND.
WE WERE ENGAGED AND HAD A DATE SET FOR THE WEDDING ...
...BUT SIX MONTHS AGO, HE SUDDENLY BROKE IT OFF.

I THOUGHT I WAS A CAPABLE PERSON...
...BUT AFTER I LEFT MY JOB, I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND ANOTHER ONE, AND NOTHING IS GOING RIGHT.
WELL ...
...MAYBE YOU DIDN'T NEED TO QUIT YOUR JOB JUST BECAUSE HE BROKE UP WITH YOU.

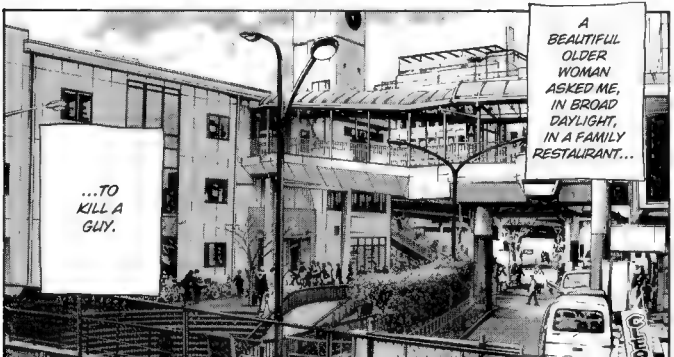
EVERYONE IN THE COMPANY KNOWS A JUNIOR MEMBER OF MY DEPARTMENT STOLE HIM FROM ME.
DO YOU THINK I COULD'VE CARRIED ON AS USUAL? I COULDN'T.
I'M SURE THE TWO OF THEM ARE DISCUSSING THE PERFECT VENUE NOW.
BUT...
...IF WE HADN'T BROKEN UP...
...TODAY WOULD'VE BEEN MY WEDDING DAY.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE ONE WEARING THE DRESS.

I'LL PAY YOU EVERY-THING I HAVE.
I'VE MADE UP MY MIND.
I DON'T WANT TO LIVE ANYWAY.
KILL...
...HIM.



ARE YOU...
...SURE?

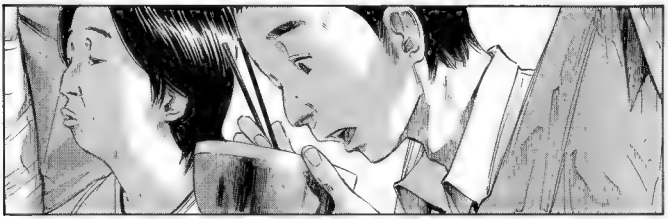
I'LL DO IT.

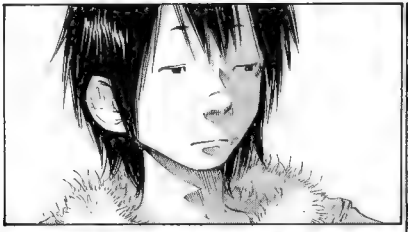

A BEAUTIFUL OLDER WOMAN ASKED ME, IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, IN A FAMILY RESTAURANT...
...TO KILL A GUY.

WAS THAT EVEN REAL?
IT COULD DEFINITELY BE A SETUP.

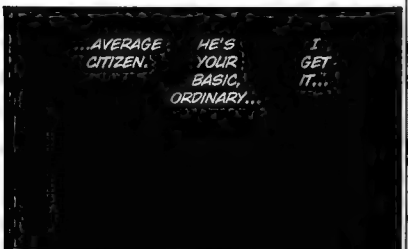
NO GRAND MEANING OR REASON...
SOMEHOW, THINGS HAPPEN IN THE FLOW.
BUT, THE CRIMES WE HEAR ABOUT ON THE NEWS ARE PROBABLY JUST LIKE THIS...
ONE DAY, OUT OF THE BLUE, IT JUST HAPPENS.

...
DESTINY.
SO THIS IS...
HE'S REAL.
RIGHT NOW...
...I FEEL LIKE I CAN DO ANYTHING.

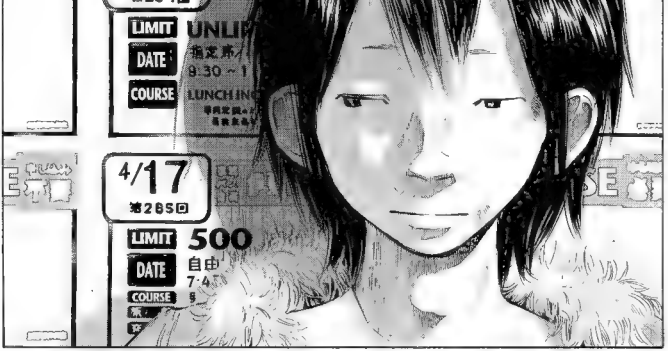


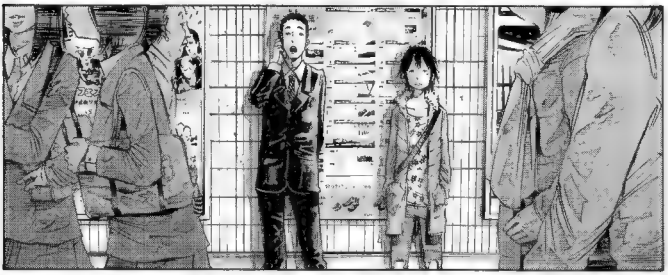


松野家
MATSUNOYA


...AVERAGE CITIZEN.
HE'S YOUR BASIC, ORDINARY...
I GET IT...

I DON'T THINK HE'S PARTICULARLY BAD.
OF COURSE, ON THE SURFACE, THAT WOMAN SEEMS THE SAME.
TRULY RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE DON'T EXIST.
I'M SURE...
...THEY'RE JUST A LITTLE OFF-BALANCE...

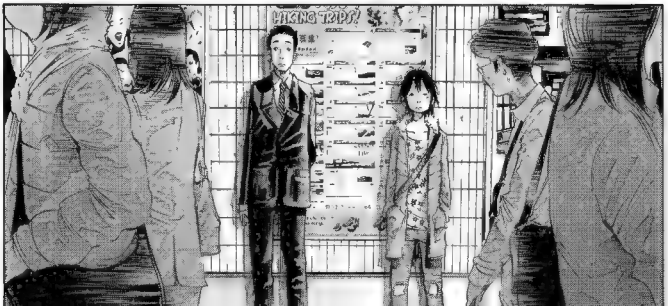


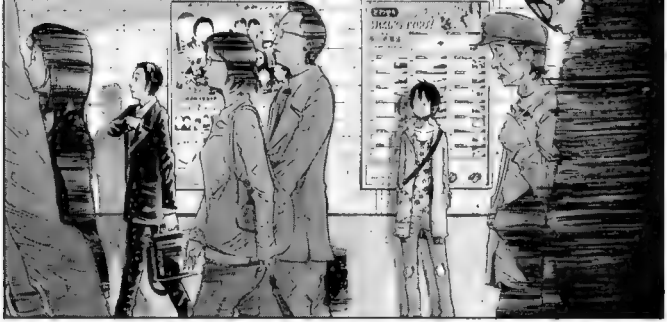


...OR SUDDENLY JERK TO A STOP.

THEY FLAIL AROUND LIKE PUPPETS ON A STRING...

THE MORE YOU OBSERVE PEOPLE, THE MORE ALIEN THEY ARE.





...BUT I DON'T THINK A SINGLE ONE IS GENUINE.
THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE HERE RIGHT NOW...
I WONDER...

THEY'VE LOST SIGHT OF WHO THEY REALLY ARE.
EMPTY SHELLS, EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM.

HOW DO I PROVE THAT I'M ME?
THAT'S TRUE FOR ME TOO.
TICKETS
AN ALL-SEEING, ALL-KNOWING ENTITY IS SUCH A CROCK.
"I CAN SEE GOD."
WHEN WE WERE LITTLE, SHIMIZU USED TO SAY...
OH, HI, IT'S ME...
SORRY, I JUST MISSED THE TRAIN.
REALLY? YOU'RE ALREADY THERE? SORRY...
IF YOU WANT, JUST GO TO A CAFÉ OR SOMETHING WHILE YOU WAIT.

...AND SOMEHOW YOU SURVIVE. IS THAT BEING HUMAN?

...YOU CREATE A GOD TO CLING TO, AND THEN HEAP ALL YOUR FEARS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ONTO HIM...

BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE...

...IS SO VIVID AND ALIVE, IT'S ALMOST CREEPY.

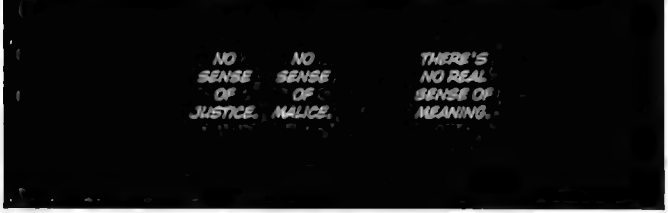
...THE FEEL OF THAT $1,000 DEPOSIT IN MY POCKET...

...OR AT LEAST FOR THIS MOMENT...

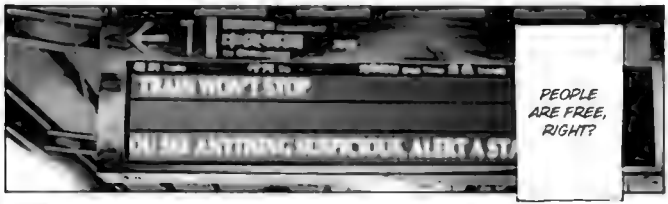
UNFORTUNATELY, TODAY...

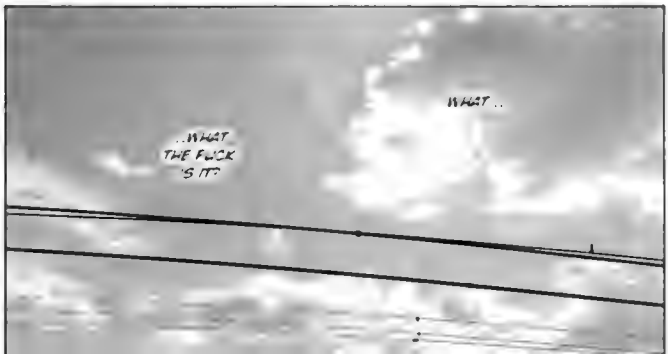
THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.

THERE'S HIS BACK. I PUSH IT.

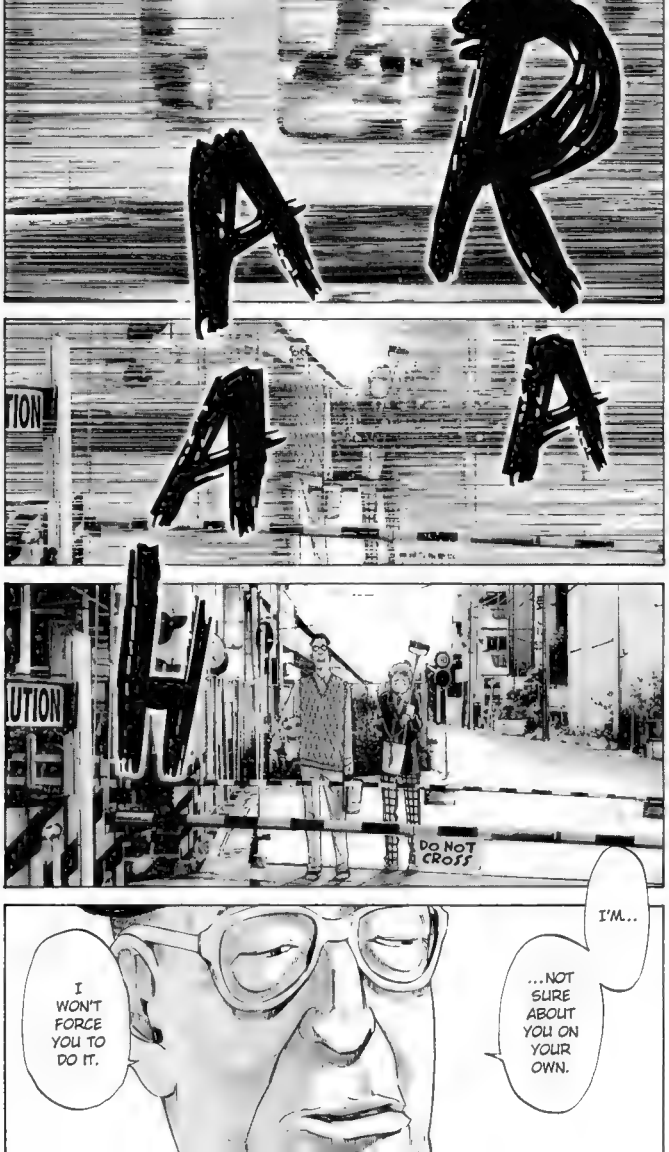

NO SENSE OF JUSTICE.
NO SENSE OF MALICE.
THERE'S NO REAL SENSE OF MEANING.

SO.
JUST DO IT.


PEOPLE ARE FREE, RIGHT?

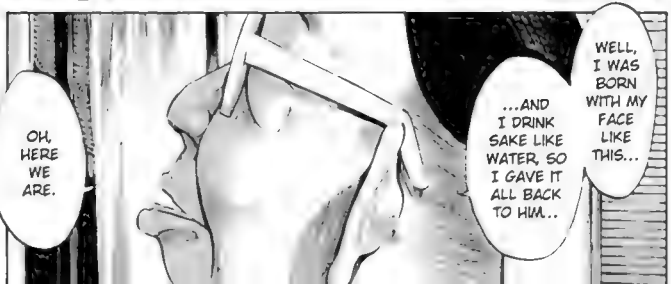

WHAT..
..WHAT THE FUCK 'S IT?

TODAY REALLY IS...
...A STUPID...
...NICE DAY.


AR
TION
AA
UTION
H
DO NOT CROSS
I'M...
...NOT SURE ABOUT YOU ON YOUR OWN.
I WON'T FORCE YOU TO DO IT.

THE ROOM WE'RE GOING TO CLEAN WAS RENTED TO AN OLD MAN IN HIS SEVENTIES WITH NO FAMILY.
HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY MONEY, BUT HE WAS A NICE OLD GUY, SO I GAVE HIM A BIG BREAK ON THE RENT.
THEN ABOUT FOUR OR FIVE YEARS AGO NOW...
...HE TURNED UP AT MY PLACE, BEAMING, WITH A BUNCH OF WATER BOTTLES.

HE SAID THE WATER WAS INFUSED WITH POWER AND WANTED ME TO DRINK IT FOR MY HEALTH.
AND HE SAID SOMETHING LIKE, "IF YOU DON'T SMILE ENOUGH, YOU'LL BE MISERABLE."
I ASKED IF HE'D GOTTEN INTO RELIGION ...
...BUT HE ABSOLUTELY DENIED IT.

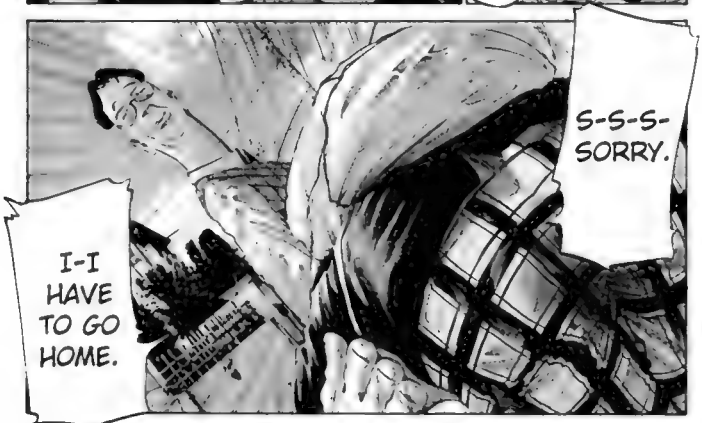

WELL, I WAS BORN WITH MY FACE LIKE THIS...
...AND I DRINK SAKE LIKE WATER, SO I GAVE IT ALL BACK TO HIM..
OH, HERE WE ARE.

I THINK IT WAS A SUB-ARACH-NOID HEMOR-RHAGE.
WELL, HE REALLY DIED OF LONELI-NESS.
YOU KNOW HOW IT'S BEEN SO NICE AND WARM LATELY...
THERE WAS A LOT OF DECOMPOSI-TION, AND THE ROOM LOOKS LIKE IT'S COVERED IN JELLY.

MAKES YOU THINK...
IT'S UP TO YOU WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN.

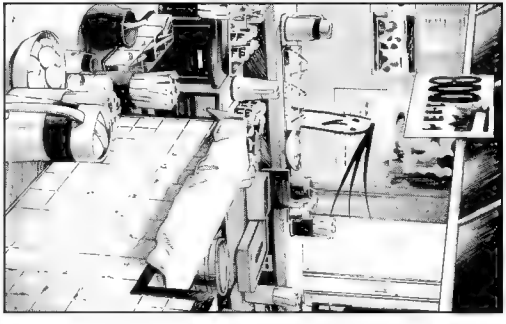
BUT FAITH...
YOU CAN SMILE ON YOUR OWN ALL YOU WANT...
ESSEN-TIALLY, IT ISN'T THE POINT OF LIVING, IT'S JUST A MEANS OF LIVING, RIGHT?
...BUT IN THE END, BEING ALONE IS JUST TOO LONELY.

PSSH
SSH.SSH
HE REALLY WAS AN UNPRETENTIOUS MAN.
IF HE'D JUST MADE AN EFFORT AT NORMAL CONVERSATION...
...I'M SURE WE COULD'VE BEEN FRIENDLY ENOUGH TO GRAB A DRINK TOGETHER.


S-S-S-SORRY.
I-I HAVE TO GO HOME.

THAT'S FOR THE BEST.
IF I WEREN'T WEARING ADULT DIAPERS, THERE'D BE ANOTHER PUDDLE.

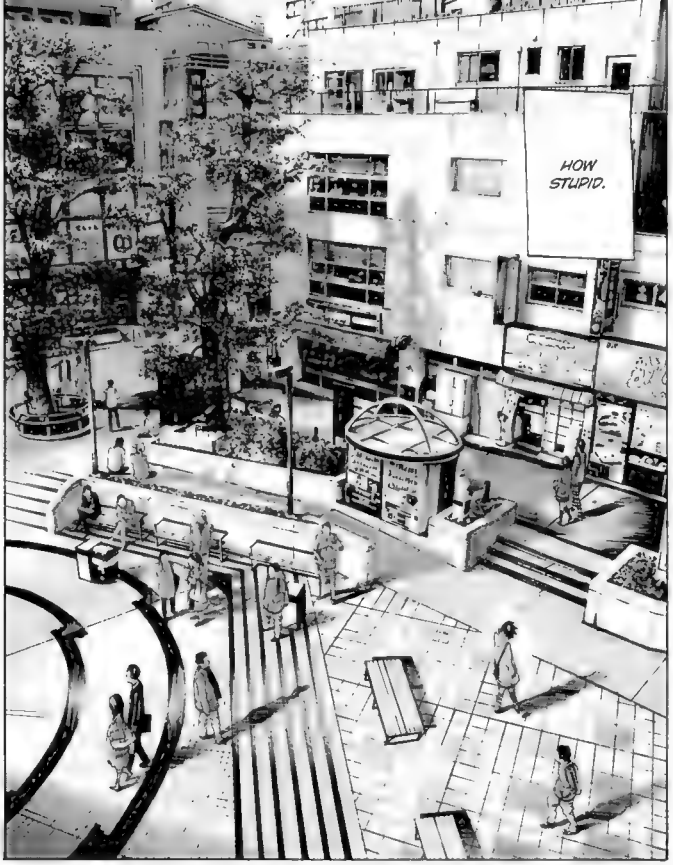
SEKI...
...YOU IDIOT.

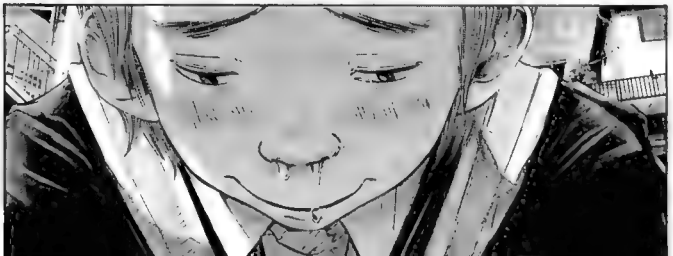


I GOT A CALL FROM MY DAD IN THE HOSPITAL.
SORRY!
... YOU'RE LATE.
HEY ...

HA HA, TELL HIM I'M WORKING ON IT...
I TOLD HIM TO STOP BEING SILLY AND FOCUS ON GETTING BETTER.
HE SAID, "I CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT THINKING ABOUT SEEING MY GRANDKID'S FACE SOON!"

IT'S A MIRACLE.
IT'S GREAT THAT YOUR DAD'S DOING BETTER.


HOW STUPID.



...you can do whatever you want.
Shimi ...

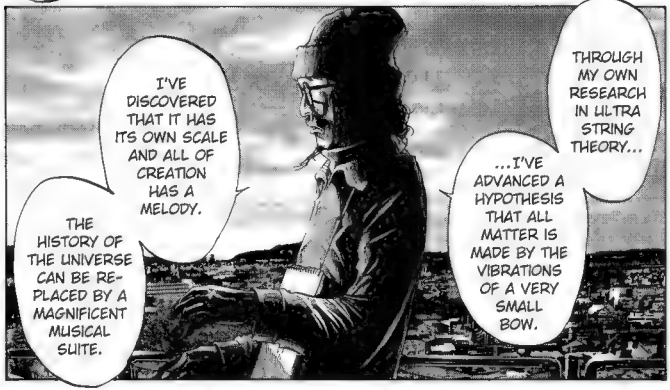
YOU'RE SUCH A LIAR, POOP GOD.
I CAN'T ..
...DO ANYTHING BY MYSELF.

HEY ...
SEKI SAID THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS GOD.
DOES THAT MEAN ...
...YOU DON'T REALLY EXIST EITHER?

EVERYONE HAS ONE SOMEWHERE IN THEIR HEARTS.
The universe is empty. —Tuvia.
BUT THERE IS.

I...
I WONDER WHAT YOU'RE SEEING RIGHT NOW?
I CAN SEE A HERD OF PEGASUSES GALLOPING THROUGH THE SKY.
...SO YOU'RE EXTREMELY LUCKY.
BUT THEY'RE VERY DIFFICULT TO SEE WITH YOUR EYES...

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.
CALL ME PEGASUS.
BUT IT SAYS TOSHIKI.
THANK YOU! CALL ME PEGASUS.


THROUGH MY OWN RESEARCH IN ULTRA STRING THEORY...
...I'VE ADVANCED A HYPOTHESIS THAT ALL MATTER IS MADE BY THE VIBRATIONS OF A VERY SMALL BOW.
I'VE DISCOVERED THAT IT HAS ITS OWN SCALE AND ALL OF CREATION HAS A MELODY.
THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE CAN BE RE-PLACED BY A MAGNIFICENT MUSICAL SUITE.

CAN YOU HEAR IT?
THE DISSONANCE THAT ENVELOPS THE WORLD?

OH, OH, OH...
WAIT, WAIT.
I'M NOT A CREEP, I'M NOT A CREEP!
I KNOW THERE'S SOMETHING ONLY YOU CAN DO.
ONE DAY I STARTED HEARING STRANGE MELODIES IN MY DREAMS.
LISTEN TO ME...
BY WRITING THEM DOWN AND ANALYZING THEM, I WAS ABLE TO ACCESS THE FUTURE.
WE ARE THE CHOSEN PEOPLE.

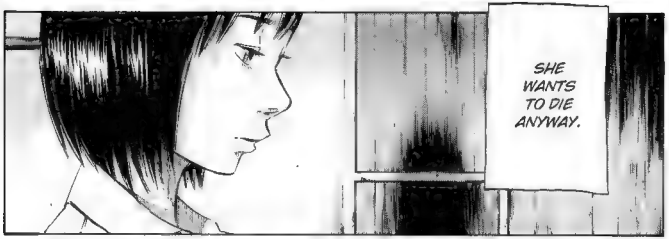
IF WE GO ON LIKE THIS, IN FIVE YEARS' TIME, ON JULY 7...
...THE EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED.

OUR COMRADES HAVE SLOWLY STARTED GATHERING.
WE NEED YOUR HELP.

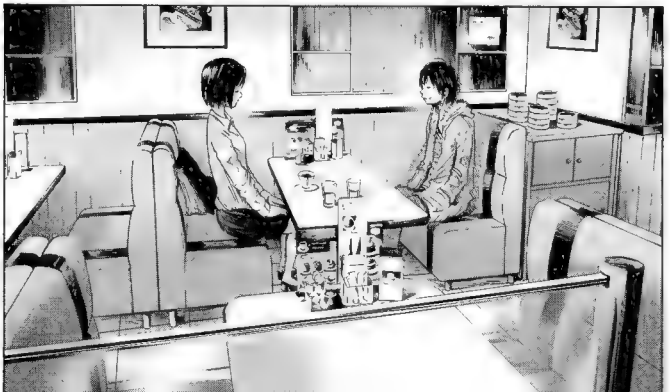
WILL YOU COME WITH ME?
OUR VIBRATIONS ARE POWERFULLY MATCHED AS PERFECT FIFTHS.
FOR LOVE AND PEACE AND THE PURSUIT OF HUMANITY.

GOOD...
...
VIBRATIONS.
The universe is crying!!
—Toshiki

SO WHY DID I COME BACK?
I COULD'VE JUST TAKEN THE MONEY AND RUN..
WHATEVER..


SHE WANTS TO DIE ANYWAY.

I COULD TELL HER A BUNCH OF LIES AND TAKE ALL HER MONEY.



I'M SORRY.
I COULDN'T DO IT.
OH...
THANK GOOD-NESS.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF HE WAS REALLY DEAD.

I'M SORRY...
I'M REALLY ALL OVER THE PLACE TODAY.
HUH?!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? WHY ARE YOU CRYING?

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BLURT OUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

REALLY ...
...I JUST WANTED HIM TO UNDERSTAND WHAT I'D BEEN GOING THROUGH.
...AND I KEPT CALLING YOU, BUT YOU WOULDN'T PICK UP.
AFTER YOU LEFT, I CAME TO MY SENSES...
I GUESS I WAS PRETTY SHAKEN UP TOO.
HUH.

I THINK...
...YOU SHOULD THANK THE GOD IN CHARGE OF TODAY'S WEATHER.
PEOPLE'S FATES SEEM TO CHANGE JUST LIKE THAT, ACCORDING TO THE WEATHER.

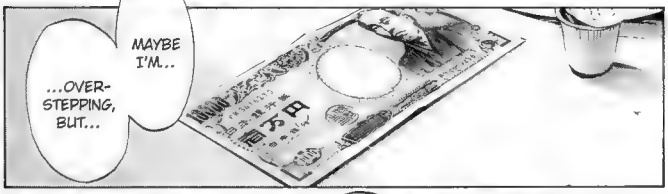
THIS HAS BEEN VERY EDUCATIONAL.
I DON'T WANT IT.
KEEP THE MONEY I ALREADY GAVE YOU.
HEY...
PEOPLE ARE JUST A BUNCH OF WEAK CREATURES PRETENDING TO BE STRONG.
JUST PLEASE FORGET WHAT HAPPENED.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?
THIRTY-FIVE.
YOU DON'T LOOK IT.
EVERY-ONE SAYS THAT.

HEH HEH...
...SO THAT'S IT...
YOU'RE OLDER THAN ME.

HERE'S SOME MONEY...
HAVE DINNER ON ME.

HEY.
YOU'RE MUCH CUTER WHEN YOU SMILE.


MAYBE I'M...
...OVER-STEPPING, BUT...

THERE ARE LOTS OF DIFFERENT WAYS TO BE HAPPY...
...SO RATHER THAN FOCUS-ING ON MAKING OTHER PEOPLE MISERABLE, IT'S BETTER TO AIM FOR YOUR OWN HAPPINESS.
...YOU'D RATHER HAVE A CAREER THAN A FAMILY, RIGHT?
I THINK I KIND OF GET THAT.

SPLISH

YOU'RE JUST A KID.
DON'T ACT LIKE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

THAT'S INFURIATING.
YOU'RE RIGHT— I THINK SO TOO.

IDIOT, YOU DON'T HAVE THE GUTS.
MAYBE I SHOULD'VE TRIED FOR HER NUMBER?

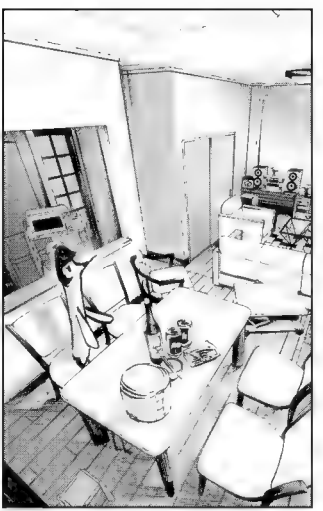
THAT'S ME.
...BUT THE SLIGHTEST THING BROUGHT ME DOWN.
I THOUGHT I WAS FOCUSING ON FREEDOM AND ALL THESE BIG IDEAS...
SEE WHAT HAPPENED?

I WONDER IF HE'S ANGRY BECAUSE I JUST DO WHAT I WANT ALL THE TIME.
WHERE IS SHIMIZU?

GUESS WHO?
I'M JUST A LITTLE SORRY

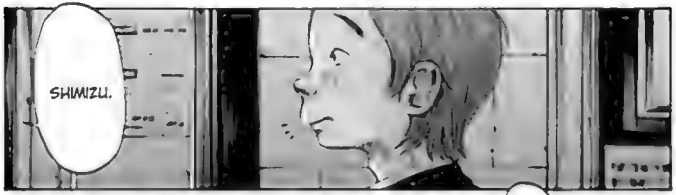
SEKI, ARE YOU CRYING?
SHUT UP.
YOU'RE LATE, SHIMIZU.
FOR A SECOND THERE, I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER COME BACK.

HEY, WHY ARE YOU WEARING SWEATS?
MORE TO THE POINT, DID YOU GET PAID FOR CLEAN-ING?
WELL... NEVER MIND.
TODAY WAS MORE FUN THAN USUAL.
SIGH.
PEOPLE ARE SO STUPID.



Chapter 55 ★

RECYCLE one


SHIMIZU.

KARAOKE GINGA
YOU PICK.
... TREAT OUR-SELVES TO A GOOD MEAL.
WE SHOULD ...

HEY, HO...
THIS THROBBING BEAT SHREDS THE RULES!
THE BELL OF A NEW GENERATION CAN'T BE
BLASTING ALL THE HEADS, OLD AND YOUNG.
MERCILESS RHYMES, RAGING IN YOUR LIVING ROOM.
YOUR LOVE CALLS MY LUST LIKE A SONIC BOOM!
FEEL IT SHAKING UP JAPAN, HERE'S MY SYNCO-PATION.
IT'S A LOVE REVOLUTION, PISSING AS A NATION.

I HEARD SHE'S HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH HER MANAGER.
MIMURA IS SO PROUD OF HAVING SCREWED THIRTY GIRLS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.
HA HA, HOW PATHETIC.
HEY, WHERE'S KANIE?
ISN'T IT RISKY TO SMUGGLE IN BOOZE?
NO WORRIES. ACTUALLY, I THINK WE NEED MORE.
Punpun's high school life, with all new classmates, had just started.
And he wanted to say, very frankly...
MIDTERMS ARE OVER!
LET'S GO ALL OUT!

...that he was absolutely stunned by how out of place he felt.

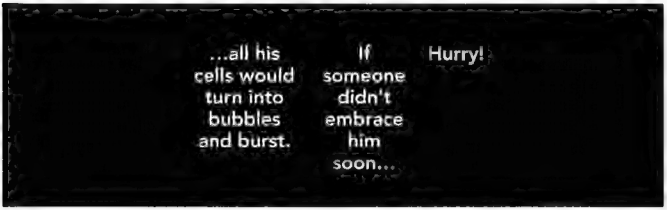
...Punpun's heart was still full of unbelonging.

Even with his hair gelled and wearing baggy pants...

SOMEONE GO GET MORE BOOZE AT THE CORNER STORE.
NO WAY, YOU IDIOT. THAT'S GOING TOO FAR.
OKAY, SO NUMBER FOUR HAS TO FRENCH NUMBER SIX.

D. delinquents!
ARE YOU SERIOUS, MIMURA? I'M NUMBER FOUR!
BUT NOTICE YOU'RE NOT SAYING NO! THAT'S WHY I LIKE YOU.
YOU SKANK!
ACTUALLY, LET'S DO TOM YUM KUN. YES, LET'S DO KUN.
OH, AND ONE OF THOSE TOM YUM TOFU THINGS.
Let's do cunni-
HEY HEY HEY HEY...
ONOTTI, IT'S LIKE YOU'RE IN A COMA!
PUMP IT UP!
YAAAY

Punpun no longer knew who he was.
Drink


...all his cells would turn into bubbles and burst.
If someone didn't embrace him soon...
Hurry!

...if someone would let him stick it in, just the tip.
...he would be ever so grateful...
Also, if it wasn't too much to ask...
ONODERA...
...ARE YOU OKAY?

OH, SORRY, YOU DON'T REMEMBER MY NAME.
I'M KANIE FROM CLASS C.
I'M NOT VERY MEMORABLE.
ONODERA, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN DRINKING, AND YOU AREN'T SINGING.
ARE YOU BORED?

IF YOU WANT...
...WE COULD JUST LEAVE...

YOU KNOW ...
...MAYBE IT'S OBVIOUS, BUT...

...IT'S BEEN DRIVEN HOME TO ME...
...THAT PEOPLE ARE ALL DIFFERENT.
AND DIFFERENT PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT LIVES...
...AND WHETHER THEY'RE WORTHWHILE OR WORTHLESS IS SOMETHING THEY SHOULD DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES.
GYOZA
750

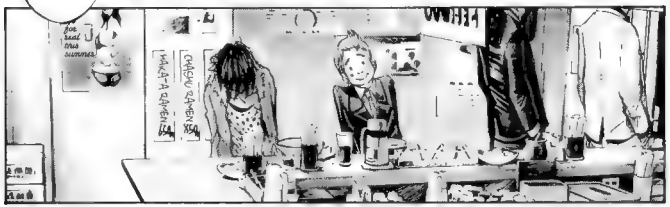
SO POINTING OUT ALL THE FLAWS IN OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES TO MAKE MYSELF FEEL BETTER...
...JUST BOOMERANGED ON ME.
BASICALLY, DISSATISFACTION WITH OTHERS IS ACTUALLY DISSATISFACTION WITH YOURSELF.
GYOZA
750
CHAHSU RAMEN
850
HAKATA RAMEN
650

I THINK MAYBE I'LL GET A PART-TIME JOB...
I COULD BECOME INDEPENDENT AND GET MY OWN PLACE.

WAS THAT ...
...RIDICULOUSLY SINCERE?
YEAH, I DON'T COMPLETELY BUY IT...
I'M STILL CONFLICTED.
GYOZA
750
CHAHSU RAMEN
850

BUT YOU KNOW, SHIMIZU ...
...UM, FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU FALL IN LOVE...
... EVENTALLY WE WON'T HAVE TIME TO HANG OUT THAT MUCH.
GYOZA
CHASHU RAMEN

SEKI, IT'S LIKE YOU'RE DRUNK.
IDIOT ...
I'M ONLY DRINKING COKE...
GYOZA

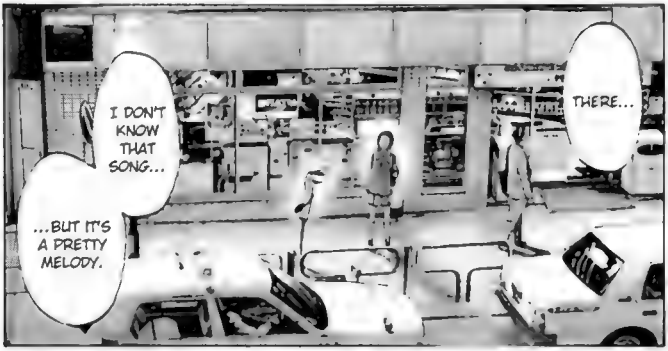

Go for veal this summer!
CHASHU RAMEN

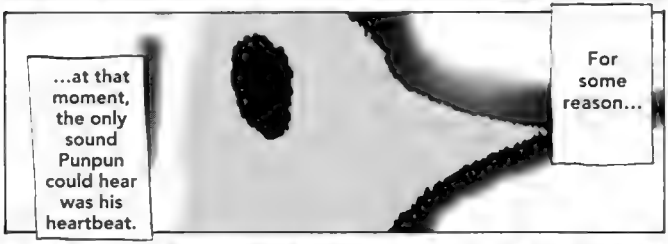
HEY, SHI-MIZU ...
WHAT KIND OF ADULTS ...
...DO YOU THINK WE'LL BE?
Go for veal this summer!
GYOZA
CHASHU RAMEN

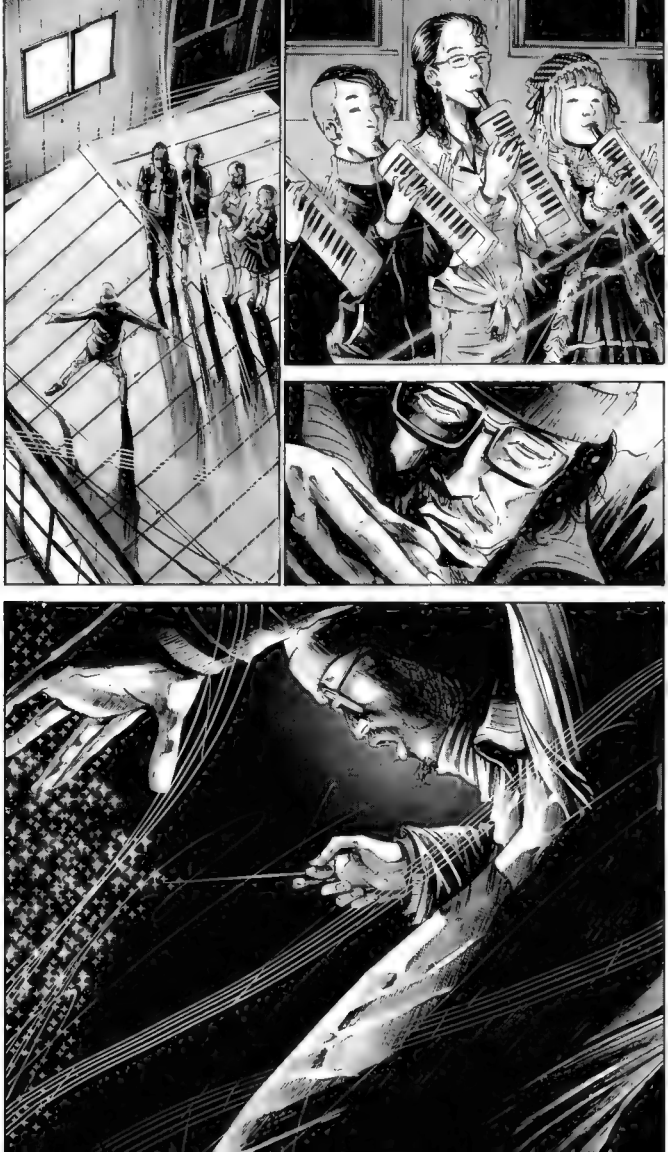
I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE.
TOO MANY TRICKS OF FATE IN LIFE, DON'T YOU THINK?
THANKS, ONODERA ...
I FELT A LITTLE AWKWARD LEAVING BY MYSELF.
OUR SCHOOL HAS SUCH HIGH SCORES, SO I THOUGHT EVERYONE WOULD BE AN ACADEMIC, BUT...
I DIDN'T WANT TO BE A DOWNER WHEN EVERYONE ELSE WAS HAVING SUCH A GOOD TIME.
PEOPLE WHO CAN STUDY HARD AND PARTY HARD...
...MAKE ME A LITTLE ENVIOUS.
HINKO
GAME
DANCE STUDIO
KARAOKE

GEEZ ...
...MY NARROW-MINDEDNESS MAKES ME A LITTLE SAD.
...THERE'S A PART OF ME THAT WANTS TO MOCK THEM TOO.
BUT...
PEOPLE USUALLY TELL ME MY STORIES ARE BORING.
OH, SORRY, IT'S NOT LIKE THERE'S A POINT TO THIS.
There didn't need to be a point...
...because Punpun pretty much agreed with her.
HEY.

DO YOU HEAR THAT?

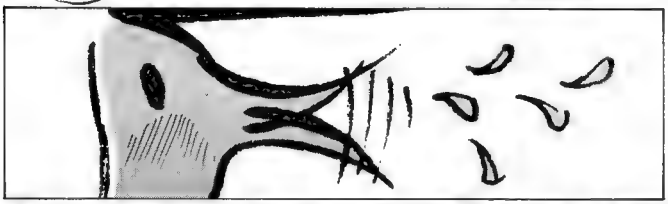

THERE...
I DON'T KNOW THAT SONG...
...BUT IT'S A PRETTY MELODY.


For some reason...
...at that moment, the only sound Punpun could hear was his heartbeat.



GOODNIGHT PUNPUN
Part Five
INIO ASANO
CIGARETTES
LIQUOR
MART

HUH?
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, ONODERA?



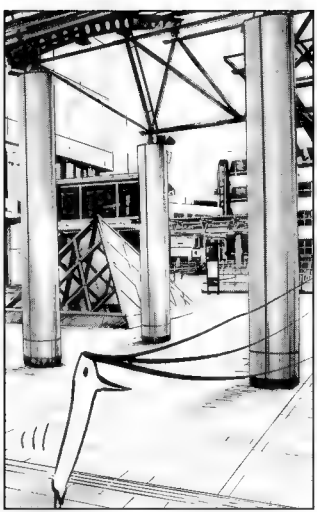
LIQUOR
UM...
...OKAY.
"Do you want to hang with me next weekend?"
Punpun repeated boldly.

IT FEELS WEIRD TO JUST SAY THIS...
...BUT YOU NEVER KNOW HOW LIFE IS GOING TO TURN OUT, SO...
...LET'S MAKE SURE...
...WE STAY FRIENDS.

GOOD VIBRA-TIONS!
THE WHAT NOW?

YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.
803 ONODERA
I'LL LEAVE WORK EARLY TOMORROW.

WHAT ABOUT YUICHI? OH, I SEE.
I'LL BRING PUNPUN AND TRY TO GET THERE BY EARLY EVENING.
SORRY TO PUT YOU OUT, MIDORI...
NO, NEVER MIND, I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW.
OH...
HI, PUNPUN.
YOUR GRANDPA DIED.



ONODERA.
WHAT GOOD TIMING! I WENT TO LOOK FOR YOU IN YOUR CLASS-ROOM...
SORRY, ARE YOU IN A RUSH TO GET HOME?
KANIE, HURRY UP.
ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID YESTERDAY ...
ARE YOU...
...INTER-ESTED IN, LIKE, ART?
But...
...absolutely not.
To be honest...

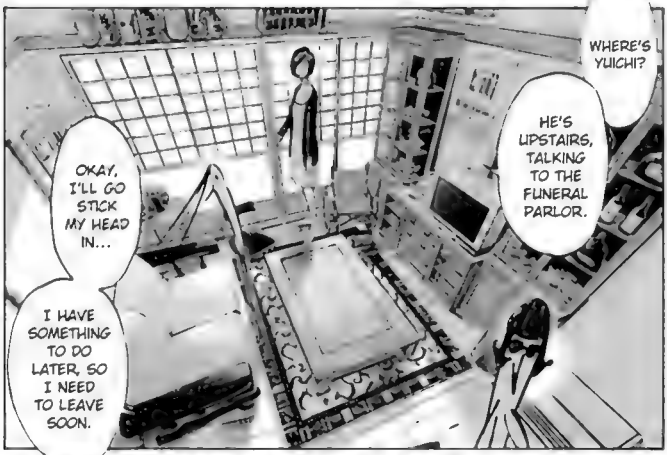
DO YOU WANT TO...
...GO WITH ME?
MY SISTER...
...IS IN AN ART SHOW NEXT WEEKEND.
THAT'S CREEPY.
WHY ARE YOU SMIRKING?
WERE YOU HERE LONG?
OH, SO SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
LET'S GO TO OFUNA.

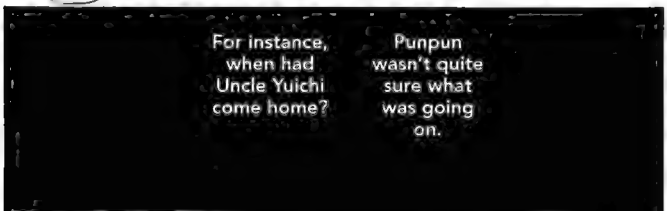
大船駅
OFUNA STATION
(東口)
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU'VE BEEN TO THEIR HOUSE?
ACTUALLY, YOU PROBABLY DON'T EVEN REMEMBER GRANDPA...
HE WAS REALLY SERIOUS AND NOT MUCH FUN.
BY THE TIME THEY FOUND HIM ON THE BATHROOM FLOOR, IT WAS TOO LATE.
HEY...
...YOU COULD AT LEAST ACKNOWL-EDGE ME.
ONODERA

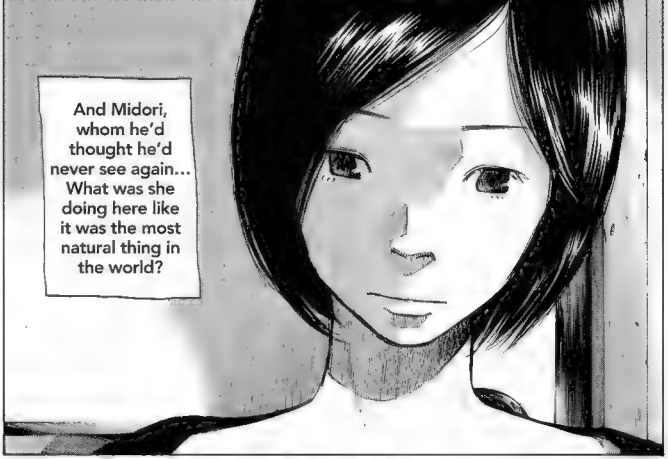
HE HAD CANCER WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER AND HE'S HAD TWO STROKES, SO HE WASN'T IN THE BEST SHAPE.
...I GUESS IT'S GOOD HE WENT SUDDENLY.
WELL ...

I FELT LIKE TELLING HIM, "DON'T BE SO STUBBORN!" BUT I GUESS WE'RE LUCKY THAT HE WASN'T MUCH TROUBLE.
AND HE DIDN'T WANT HIS KIDS TO TAKE CARE OF HIM, RIGHT?

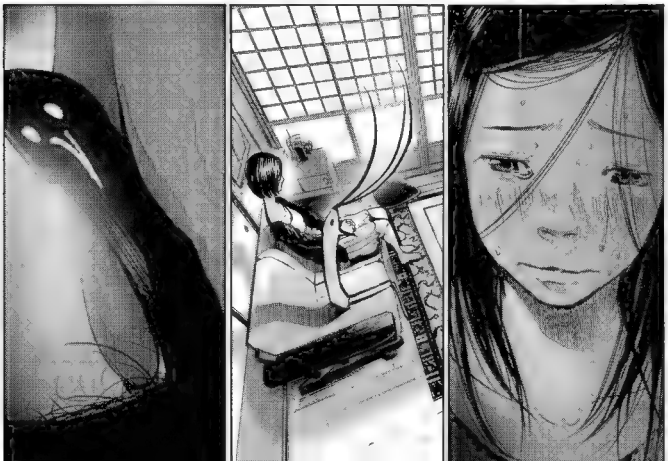
I'M SO SORRY...
IF WE HADN'T BEEN AWAY ON A TRIP, WE MIGHT'VE FOUND HIM SOONER.
DON'T WORRY. IT WAS HIS TIME.
SOMEHOW, OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS ALWAYS CHILLY...
IT CAN'T BE HELPED. I GUESS EVEN IF YOU'RE RELATED, A STRANGER IS STILL A STRANGER.


WHERE'S YUICHI?
HE'S UPSTAIRS, TALKING TO THE FUNERAL PARLOR.
OKAY, I'LL GO STICK MY HEAD IN...
I HAVE SOMETHING TO DO LATER, SO I NEED TO LEAVE SOON.


For instance, when had Uncle Yuichi come home?
Punpun wasn't quite sure what was going on.

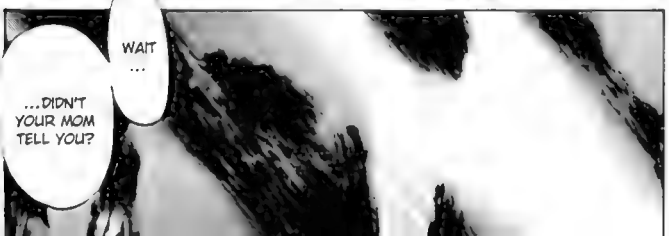

And Midori, whom he'd thought he'd never see again... What was she doing here like it was the most natural thing in the world?

Punpun was just the slightest bit rattled.



I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.
...THAT'S RIGHT.
OH...

WE WENT TO A HOT SPRING INN IN GUNMA, SO THIS ISN'T ANYTHING SPECTACULAR.
BUT I GUESS WE WERE ON OUR HONEYMOON.
WHAT WITH YOUR GRANDPA AND EVERYTHING, I DOUBT WE'LL HAVE A WEDDING ANY TIME SOON.


...DIDN'T YOUR MOM TELL YOU?
WAIT ...

I...
YUICHI AND I GOT MARRIED.
REALLY?
SHE HASN'T SAID ANY-THING?
THE DAY AFTER ...
...YOU KNOW, THAT DAY...
THE DAY AFTER YOU CAME TO SEE ME IN THE CAFÉ...
...YUICHI JUST TURNED UP.

YUICHI ...
...IS MILDLY DEPRESSED, AND HE'S SEEING A THERAPIST NOW.
SO I MADE A DECISION.
I DECIDED TO KEEP HIM IN THE PALM OF MY HAND UNTIL HE DIES...
BUT...
...I'M REALLY HAPPY RIGHT NOW.
SO...
...YOU UNDER-STAND, RIGHT?
WELL...
JUST KIDDING.

...to rip out her clitoris and her pubic hair and throw it all in a ditch.

Punpun thought about how great it would feel...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? LET'S GO.

HEY, PUN-PUN...
...WHY ARE YOU BEING SO IRRITABLE?
YOUR ATTITUDE IS PUTTING ME IN A BAD MOOD.

方面
ARE YOU MAD BECAUSE I DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT YUICHI AND MIDORI?
I WASN'T HIDING IT. YOU JUST NEVER ASKED.
YOU NEVER HAVE ANY INTEREST IN WHAT ANYONE ELSE IS DOING...
...JUST LIKE ME! THAT'S RIGHT, I SAID IT. HA HA HA!

IT'S A JOKE! LAUGH...
WHY DON'T YOU SMIRK LIKE BEFORE?

TELL ME THIS...
WHEN I DIE...
...HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK YOU'LL GRIEVE?
WHAT IS IT?
YOU THINK I SHOULD BE A BIT MORE SOMBER SINCE I'VE JUST LOST A PARENT?

WHY YOU LITTLE... WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, GIVING YOUR MOTHER THE STINK EYE?!
WHAT?
WHAT IS IT?
EH?!
OH, HERE ...
...TAKE THIS.
Rufa Runyma
SO AGGRA-VATING.

WATCH YOUR ATTITUDE FROM NOW ON...
I'M THE ONLY FAMILY YOU HAVE LEFT.
YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERY-THING...
...BUT YOU'RE STILL JUST A KID WHO KNOWS NOTHING.

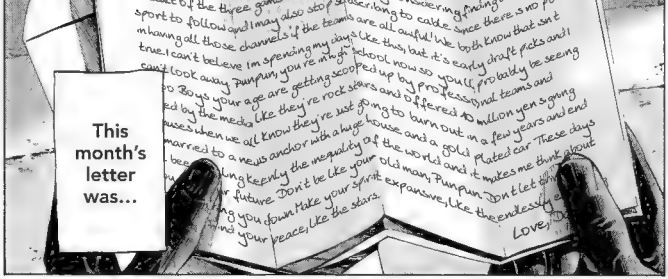
PUNPUN ...
... WHAT'S WITH THAT LOOK?
WHAT...
HEY...

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?!
IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, JUST SAY IT!
DAMN IT!
IDIOT!
DON'T CRY!
DON'T PLAY THE VICTIM!
I HATE THAT KIND OF USELESS NARCISSISM!
AAGH ...
ALWAYS GOING AROUND WITH THAT "MY SENSITIVE, WOUNDED SOUL" LOOK ON YOUR FACE!
HA HA HA HO HO HO— COUGH COUGH!

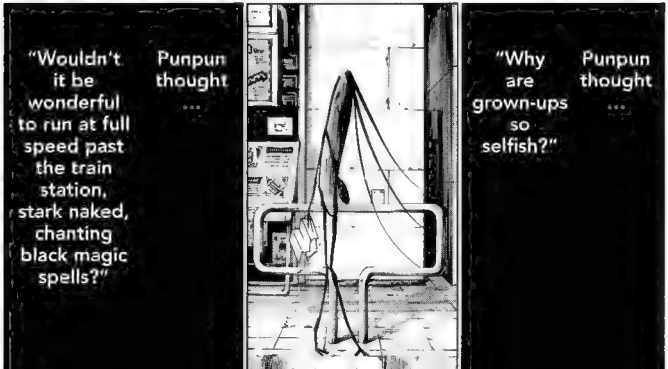
BUT...
...I CAN'T USE MY SENSITIVITY AS AN EXCUSE.
YOU KNOW...
...THERE ARE LOTS OF TIMES WHEN I WANT TO CRY.
GROW UP.
HUFF...
HUFF...
WHEN I LOOK AT YOU...
...I GET REALLY IRRITATED.

I'M HAVING A FRIEND OVER TONIGHT...
I'VE HAD IT.

...COME HOME UNTIL TOMORROW.
...SO DON'T...


This month's letter was...

HERE
DOWN
...but Punpun had never found his dad's letters as dull as he did today.
...full of baseball and outer space, as usual...


"Wouldn't it be wonderful to run at full speed past the train station, stark naked, chanting black magic spells?"
Punpun thought ...
"Why are grown-ups so selfish?"
Punpun thought ...

Elevate your mood and go for it!

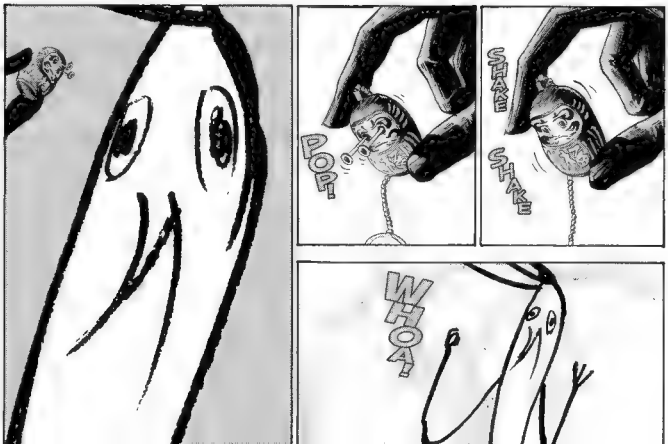
That's right...

Maybe something good will happen tomorrow?

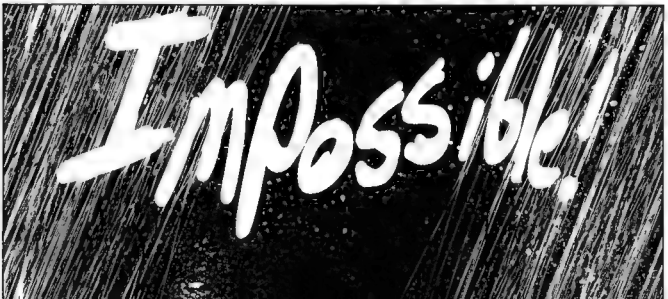
The world is probably overflowing with kindness and happiness.

It's his fault...

No, no, can't have such dangerous thoughts...

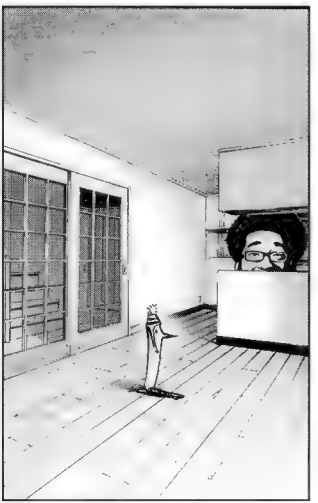


GOD
DAMN!!


Impossible!

WARRANTY

HE'S...
COMING.



GOODNIGHT PUNPUN INIO ASANO
Part Five

BACKGROUND ASSISTANTS Yuki Toribuchi
Satsuki Sato
CG ASSISTANT Hisashi Saito
COOPERATION Kumatsuto
Yasumasa Iwama
Yu Uehara
Takashi Kume

I want to know what happens to Punpun!

Nice to meet you, Mr. Asano. I'm a Punpun fan in third grade who lives in Kawasaki.

At first, when my classmate Hiroshi's older brother (buzz cut) recommended it to me, I didn't understand why it was any good. But recently I got it, and I think it's very good.

I have one question for you, Mr. Asano. When is *Goodnight Punpun* going to become a battle fantasy manga? I'm getting impatient because Punpun isn't going off for training or learning a killer move. But my classmate Hiroshi's older brother (buzz cut) says, "This is called 'pulling,' and it is a very advanced technique in comic books." Is it or isn't it? Hurry up and let us know. You can call me on my cell phone and just let me know. Darn it. *pant, pant.* I got a little excited there. You're a twisted one, Mr. Asano.

I thought you might be stuck for ideas, so I've enclosed my candidate for a nemesis. If you're going to use it, please get in touch and ask for permission. You can reach me directly on my cell phone.

Kind regards.
Junya

Junya Okamoto
(Third grade, 8 years old)
Kawasaki, Kanagawa

Is there a limit to the comic expression horizon?!

Hey, Asano! (Sorry to be so casual.) I am a cherry boy, a young soul, a dynamite, a second-year high school student who enjoys every chapter of *Goodnight Punpun*. (*sweats excitedly*)

My favorite character is Sasuke! (Wait, is that a character? Oops!) I feel that recently your story line is in a bit of a rut. (*gingerly*) But that scene where Punpun jumps from building to building on his bike was just so intense. (Wait, was that a scene? Oh crap.) Anyway, I have one question! (*energetically*) Why is this Punpun character so strange looking? Is it some kind of metaphor? It bothers me so much I can only sleep at night. Is he in the shape of a bird...or an alien...or...?! Never mind, I won't ask anymore. So basically, we'll leave it at "there are as many interpretations as there are people," right? Right? (Sorry to be so familiar.) By the way, a senior guy in my school who is also a Goodpunner (a Punpun fan, don't you know) sends me smoke signals every day telling me to read Freud. Help me!

So in conclusion, Mr. Asanovich. (Wait, was that your name? Nirvana!) Please feel free to continue your serial. I plan to work full steam ahead to fulfill my childhood dream of becoming a falconer. Later, boing!

—Issei

Issei Maeda
(Second year in high school, 17 years old)
Musashino, Tokyo

GOODNIGHT PUNPUN

Part Six

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STORY THUS FAR...

Punpun is enrolled in a highly competitive local high school. He is super excited about having a date with his classmate Kanie, but after he has a fight with his mom, she tells him not to come home. Not a great beginning to the summer of his 15th year.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PUNPUN ONODERA
He's 15 years old and in his first year in high school. He can lift 200 meters. Weight: 5 tons. Spews fire.

MAMA ONODERA
Punpun's mother. Works in a supermarket. She can fly by transforming her body scales into wings.

YUICHI ONODERA
Mama's younger brother. Teacher at a pottery school. He suffers from mild depression and is currently seeing a therapist.

MIDORI ONODERA
Yuichi's wife. Runs a café. In the language of fungi, she is a golden scalycap mushroom.

AZUSA KANIE
Punpun's classmate. She's 15 and is worried about whether her bangs are too short.

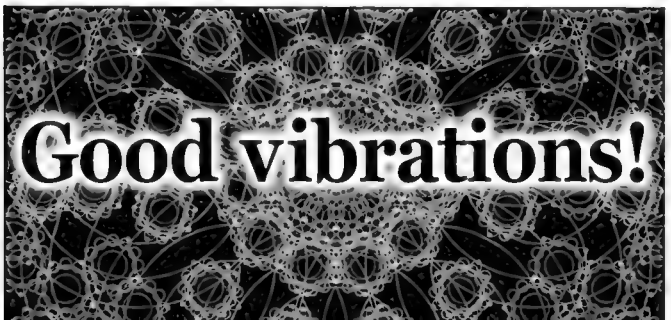
AIKO TANAKA
The classmate Punpun loved in elementary and middle school.

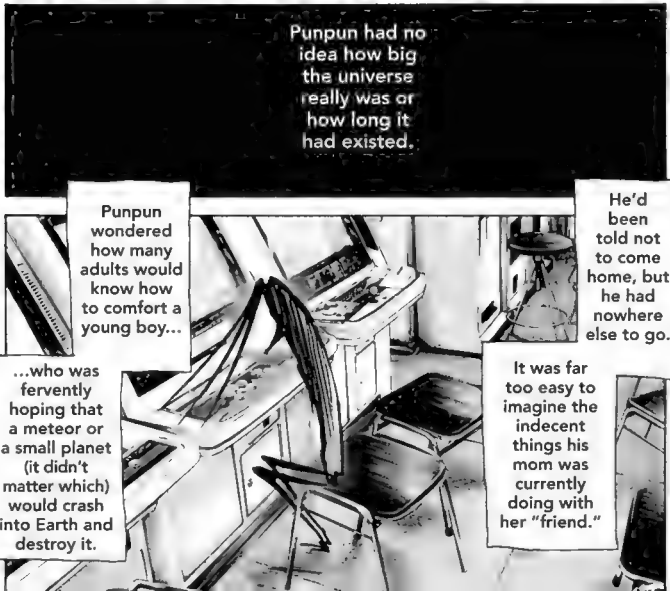
YUKINOSHIN MIMURA
Punpun's classmate. Holds the rank of 100-dan in delusional kendo. His special skill is the high-speed rear leap.

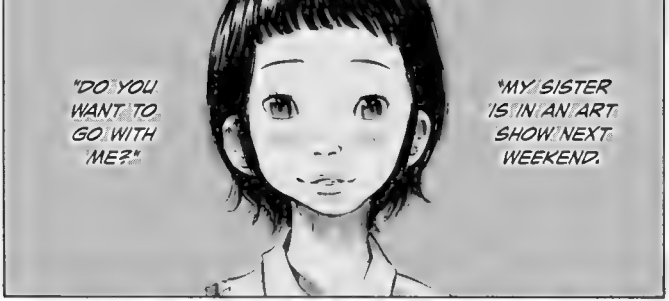
TOSHIKI
A sorcerer with no known address.

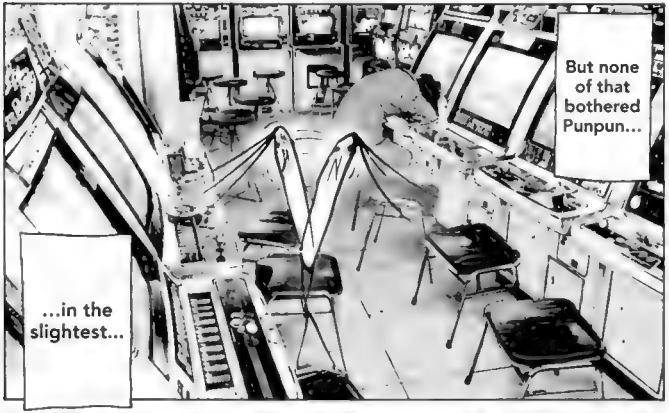
Chapter 57

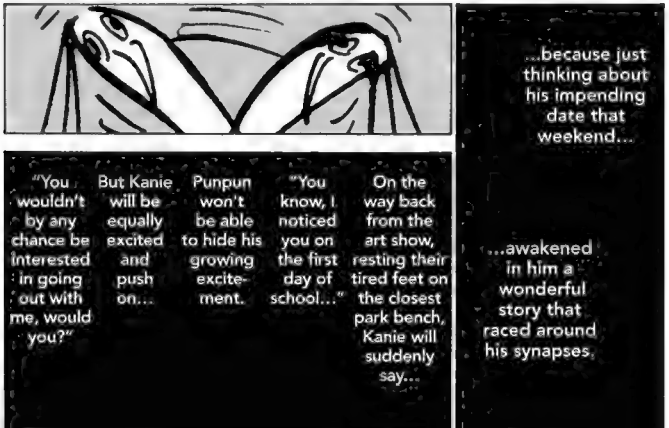
HE'S...
... COMING.


Good vibrations!


Punpun had no idea how big the universe really was or how long it had existed.
Punpun wondered how many adults would know how to comfort a young boy...
...who was fervently hoping that a meteor or a small planet (it didn't matter which) would crash into Earth and destroy it.
He'd been told not to come home, but he had nowhere else to go.
It was far too easy to imagine the indecent things his mom was currently doing with her "friend."


"DO YOU WANT TO GO WITH ME?"
"MY SISTER IS IN AN ART SHOW NEXT WEEKEND.


But none of that bothered Punpun...
...in the slightest...


...because just thinking about his impending date that weekend...
...awakened in him a wonderful story that raced around his synapses.
"You wouldn't by any chance be interested in going out with me, would you?"
But Kanie will be equally excited and push on...
Punpun won't be able to hide his growing excitement.
"You know, I noticed you on the first day of school..."
On the way back from the art show, resting their tired feet on the closest park bench, Kanie will suddenly say...

Just a few days into their relationship, Kanie's kissing monster will activate. She'll be on him relentlessly, even in public. Punpun will feel a little panicked in the beginning, but soon he'll be melting under her masterfully lewd tongue work. Oh my, what a dirty girl!

One night in her room, while her parents are out at a wedding, they'll finally be able to undress each other and share their body heat. They'll lose their minds rubbing against each other. Punpun will feel a heat on his thigh from deep within the nest of her pubic hair when suddenly she'll say, "Let's turn out the lights." For a second, Punpun will be disappointed that she's acting all coy, but he's a gentleman and will attempt insertion. But seeing her face all screwed up with pain, her body writhing, Punpun won't be able to keep from saying, "Sorry, maybe we should stop. I don't want to push you." Even though it's dark, Punpun will sense her expression gradually changing from anguish to joy as she whispers in his ear, "No, it's okay... I don't mind if it's you. Because..." She'll falter, then say, "Because I love you." *Ahhh*, Punpun won't be able to stop from holding her tight.

And that was why...
... Punpun was completely fine.
Uhn! Ahh! Shlong shlong! Splooge!
OH...
... WAIT!
AHHH!

I LOVE 'EM BIG...
LOVE THE BIG ONES!
OH!
OH...
OH...
...to quiet Punpun's emotions.
...and sufficiently dark and still...
The May night was chilly...
...that seemed to speak directly to his heart from around corners and deep in the shadows of telephone poles.
The hustle and bustle of the day, cooled by the evening air, underwent a chemical change into anxiety...

...caressed him slowly on the cheek before disappearing.

As if to mock him, the night breeze...

...and ended up alone for life...?

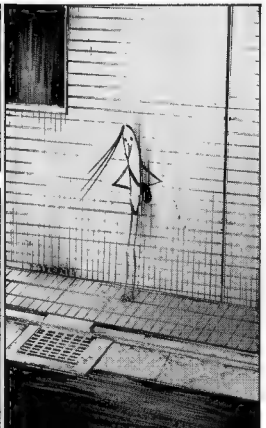
What if he messed up his date with Kanie...

...restless.

...made Punpun's heart...

...the city at night...

Somehow...



"I'm here."

"Someone please come find me..."

Punpun murmured softly to himself...

HUH?
BABY...
YOUR DAD DIED?
WHAT?
YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
I'M AS BUMMED ABOUT IT AS ANY AVERAGE PERSON COULD BE.
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN BE ALONE ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS.
NO WAY, DON'T BE MEAN.
YOU KNOW WE AREN'T CLOSE...
IT'S NOT LIKE AT YOUR HOUSE.
THEN WHY AREN'T YOU WITH YOUR SON?
KEIKUCHI

HEY ...
...THAT HURT.
MAYBE I'LL TELL YOUR WIFE ABOUT US.
I DO HAVE A GREAT RELATION-SHIP WITH MY DAUGHTER. IT'S PEACEFUL THERE.
YEAH.

NO, NO. I WAS JUST JOKING...
DON'T LOOK LIKE THAT.

YOU ALWAYS SEEM TO MISTAKE SELFISH-NESS FOR FREEDOM.
BESIDES, YOU CAME ON TO ME FIRST...
BABY ...
...GROW UP! DON'T EVEN JOKE LIKE THAT.

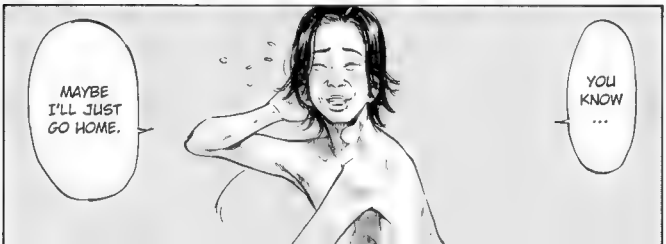
W-WHAT ...?
YOU'RE LECTURING ME, YOU ASSHOLE?
PICK YOUR MOMENT— GOD!
I TOLD YOU I WAS DOWN! SAY SOMETHING TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER!

DON'T THINK JUST BECAUSE YOUR DICK'S A LITTLE LONGER THAN MOST THAT YOU'RE SOMETHING SPECIAL!
YOU'RE DEAD WRONG IF YOU THINK I'LL KEEP ACTING LIKE A CONVENIENT SIDE PIECE!
OH, WHOA ...!
S-SORRY.
I WENT TOO FAR.
SOB ...
SOB ...
THAT WAS HARSH ...
THERE, THERE, THAT'S A GOOD GIRL.

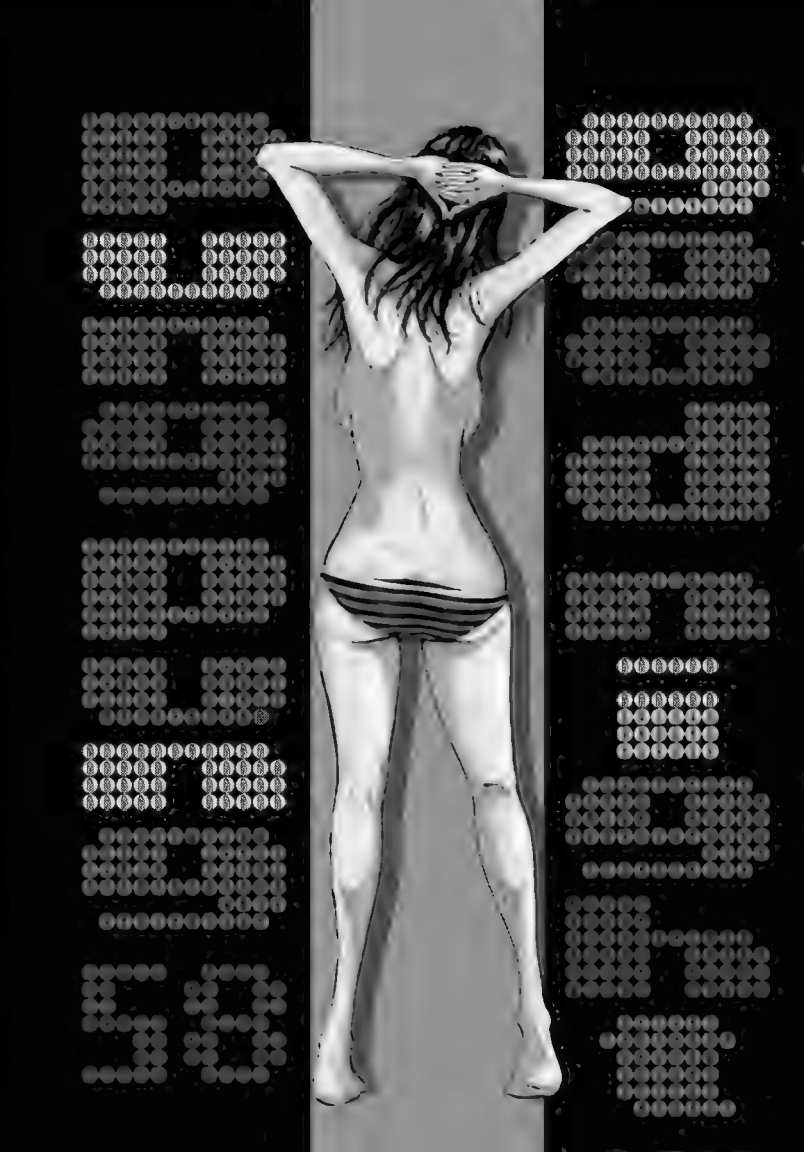
AM I A GOOD GIRL?
GOOD GIRL, GOOD GIRL.
I'M A GOOD GIRL, RIGHT?
YES, BABY, YOU REALLY ARE A GOOD GIRL.
THEN...
...MARRY ME.
UM...
...I CAN'T.

RIGHT ...
YOUR WIFE IS VERY NICE...
...EVEN THOUGH SHE'S UGLY AND FLAT CHESTED.
HA HA HA...
...PUT THAT AWAY.
HERE!
FWOP

AH, GEEZ...
I WONDER IF ANYTHING GOOD WILL EVER HAPPEN TO ME?
DO YOU WANT ANOTHER BEER?
NO, I STILL HAVE SOME LEFT.


YOU KNOW ...
MAYBE I'LL JUST GO HOME.

WAAAAH!



WHOA...
...WHOA, WAI–
WAIT JUST A SECOND, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT!
CALM DOWN!
LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS AND WORK THINGS OUT!
HM...
...I'M SO SORRY!
WHAT-EVER..
I'M NOT GOING TO STAB YOU...
YOU'RE NOT WORTH IT.

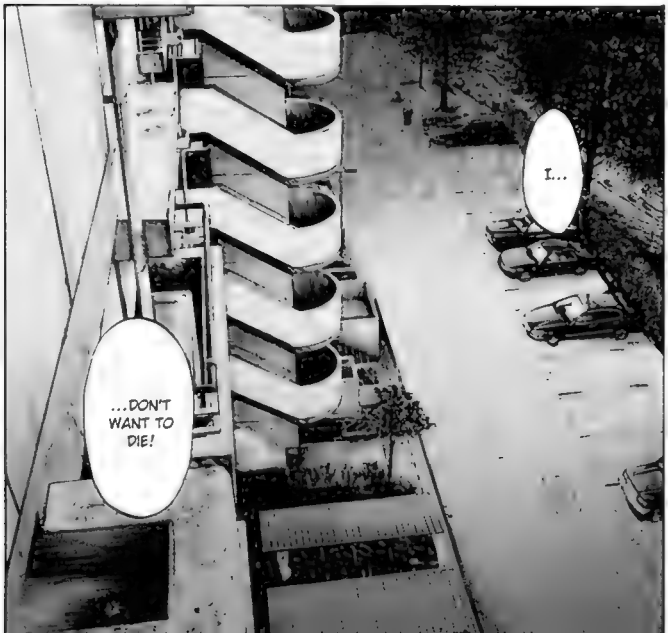
I GET IT...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS"?
WHEN THERE ARE NO ANSWERS, THE BEST DEBATER ALWAYS WINS THE DISCUSSION.
I CAN'T LOGICALLY HOPE FOR HAPPINESS ANYMORE...
ALL I'M GOOD FOR IS CHASING SOME SHALLOW PARTY GUY'S DICK.

I'M GOING TO DIE NOW.
BYE-BYE.
BUT...
...I'M TIRED.
I DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY TO BE BALLSY ANYMORE.
IF I'M REINCAR-NATED, I WANT TO COME BACK AS A BEAUTIFUL SEASHELL...
NO, SCRAP THAT.

I'M GOING TO COME BACK AS YOUR SPERM!
YEAH, THAT'S IT!
AND THEN I'M GOING TO FERTILIZE YOUR SHIT OF A WIFE AND BE BORN AS YOUR ULTIMATE SHIT OF A DAUGHTER, SO JUST WAIT FOR IT!
HE HE HE
THAT LIFE YOU THINK YOU'RE BUILDING...
...THAT AVERAGE, CONVENTIONAL, PEACEFUL LIFE...
I'M GOING TO DESTROY THAT SHIT FROM THE INSIDE OUT!
HA HA HA! COUGH COUGH!
HE HE HE

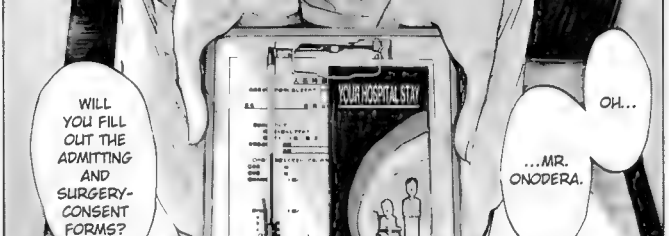
AH!
GASP!
ARR!
ARRRG!
AARGH!
THIS
...
...
FUCKING
...
...
SUCKS!
GASP!
OH
?!
CLATTER
OH
...
OH
...

HEY ...
HEY ...
BABE, ARE YOU OKAY?
I...
...I CAN'T...
WHEEZE
... BREATHE ...
CALL...
...CALL AN AMBU-LANCE.


I...
...DON'T WANT TO DIE!

WEE!
WEE!

IT'S A PULMONARY PNEUMO-THORAX.
EMERGENCY ROOM
THERE'S A HOLE IN YOUR LUNG, WHICH IS ALLOWING AIR TO LEAK INTO YOUR THORACIC CAVITY AND IS CAUSING YOUR LUNG TO COLLAPSE.
THAT'S WHAT'S MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO BREATH, AND IF IT GETS WORSE, YOU COULD GO INTO SHOCK.
IT'S WHAT'S KNOWN AS A SPONTANEOUS PNEUMOTHORAX, SINCE IT WASN'T CAUSED BY TRAUMA OR AN UNDERLYING DISEASE.
GENERALLY IT'S MORE COMMON IN THIN YOUNG MEN, BUT IT'S NOT UNHEARD OF IN WOMEN.
WE'VE PUT A TUBE INTO YOUR WIFE'S CHEST AND ARE SUCKING OUT THE AIR...
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT...
SHE'S RESPONDING WELL TO TREATMENT, AND WE CAUGHT IT BEFORE IT BECAME SERIOUS.
BUT I WOULD RECOMMEND SURGERY TO PREVENT A REOCCUR-RENCE.
IT'S A SIMPLE OPERATION. SHE'LL BE OUT IN A WEEK.


WILL YOU FILL OUT THE ADMITTING AND SURGERY-CONSENT FORMS?
YOUR HOSPITAL STAY
OH...
...MR. ONODERA.

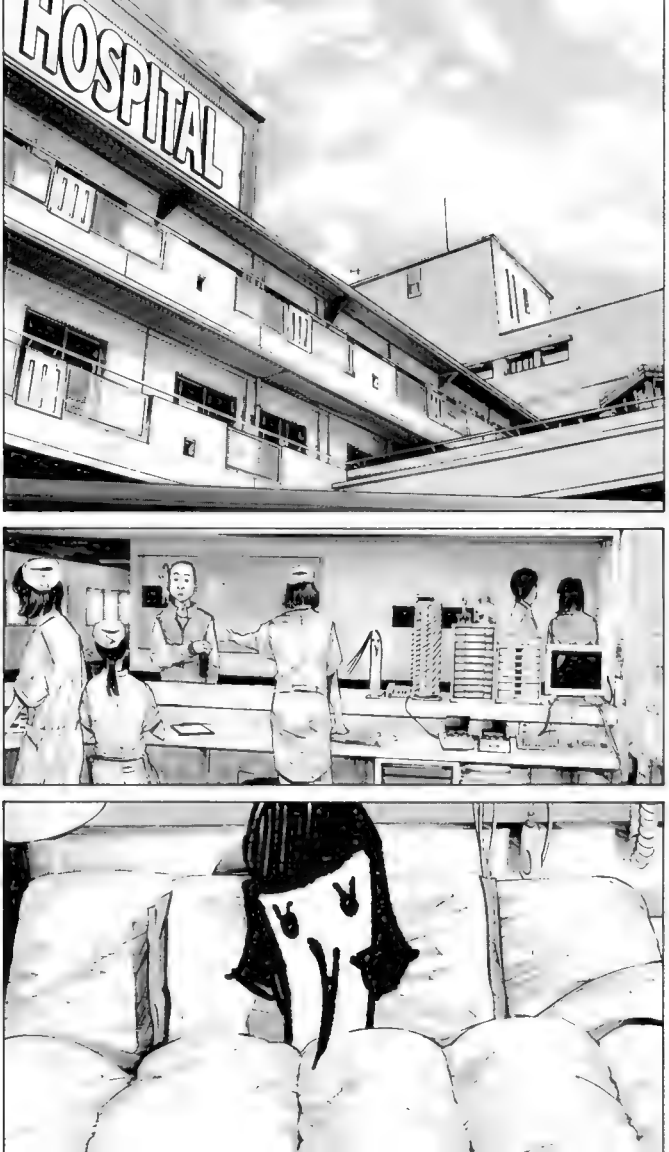
UM...
URR...
HUH?
UH...

HE'S JUST...
...A PASSERBY. HE'S NOTHING TO ME.
HE'S NOT—

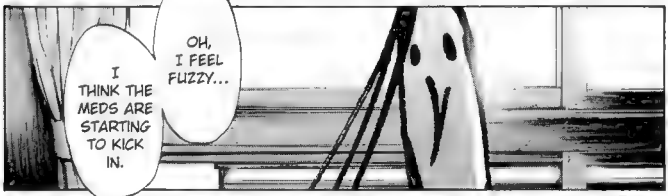
UM...
...I'M SORRY ABOUT ALL THIS.
I'M SURE WE WON'T EVER RUN INTO EACH OTHER AGAIN...
...BUT THANK YOU FOR EVERY-THING.

I'M...
...FINE ON MY OWN.

GOODBYE.

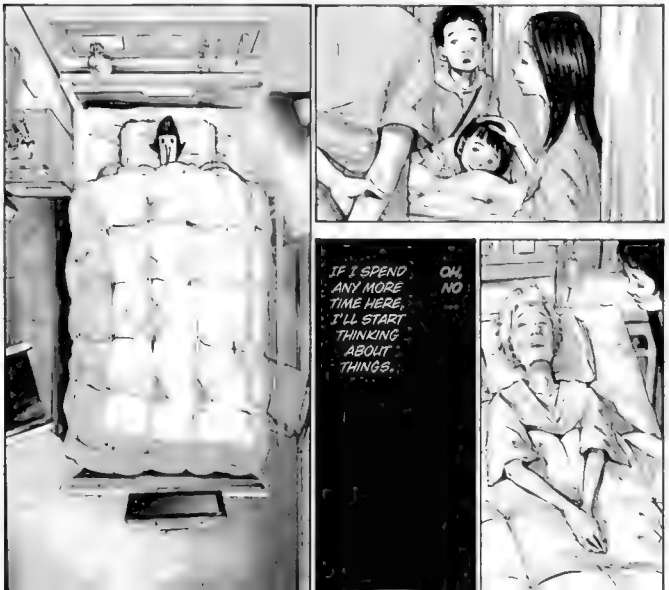

HOSPITAL

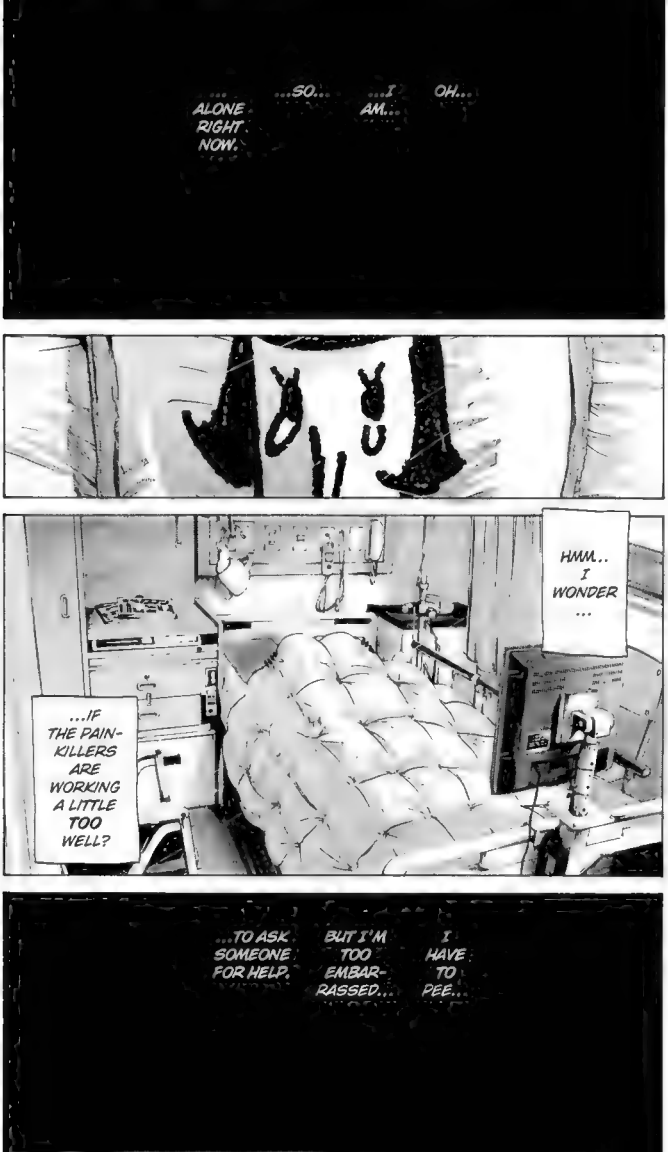
YOU KNOW ...
I SAID A LOT OF THINGS YESTER-DAY.
I'M SORRY.


OH, I FEEL FUZZY...
I THINK THE MEDS ARE STARTING TO KICK IN.

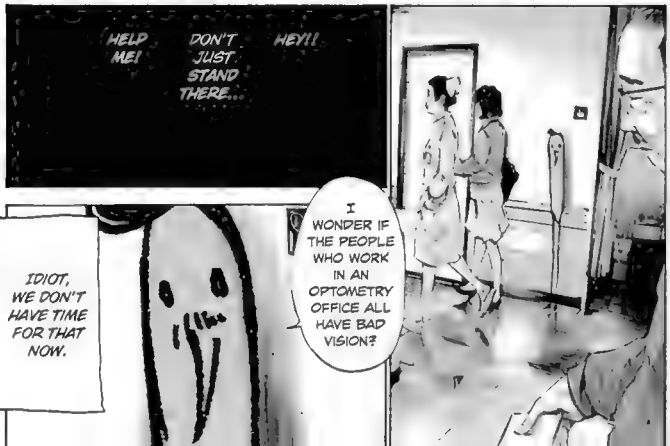
MIDORI WILL COME AND TAKE CARE OF ME.
SO YOU DON'T NEED TO VISIT. I KNOW YOU DON'T WANT TO...
MAKE SURE YOU GO TO SCHOOL.

BED NUMBER FIVE IS EMPTY NOW, SO MAKE SURE TO CHANGE IT.
OKAY, LET'S TAKE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE.
GET BETTER SOON, MOM.
BEING HEALTHY IS IMPORTANT, BUT LONGEVITY HAS ITS OWN ISSUES.
YEAH, MY HUSBAND IS HAVING VASCULAR SURGERY NEXT WEEK...


IF I SPEND ANY MORE TIME HERE, I'LL START THINKING ABOUT THINGS.
OH, NO ...


...ALONE RIGHT NOW.
...SO...
...I AM...
OH...
...IF THE PAIN-KILLERS ARE WORKING A LITTLE TOO WELL?
HMM... I WONDER ...
...TO ASK SOMEONE FOR HELP.
BUT I'M TOO EMBAR-RASSED...
I HAVE TO PEE...

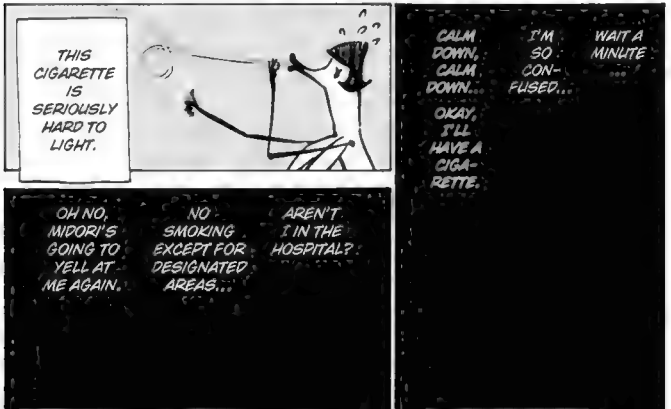
WHO KNEW THE LENGTH OF ONE HALLWAY ...
...COULD BE LIFE OR DEATH?


HELP ME!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE...
HEY!!
I WONDER IF THE PEOPLE WHO WORK IN AN OPTOMETRY OFFICE ALL HAVE BAD VISION?
IDIOT, WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT NOW.

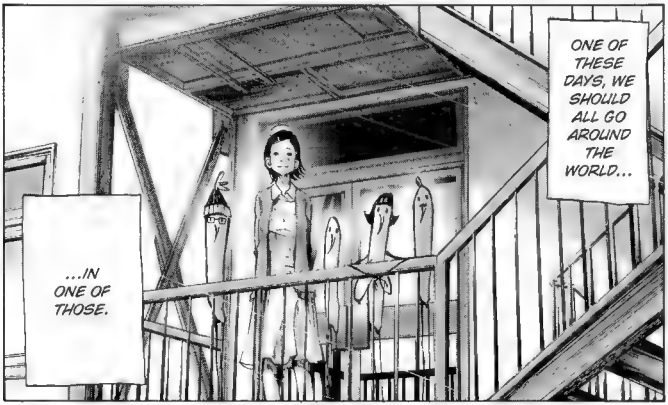
HUH?
OH, MAYBE I OVERDID IT A BIT WITH THE PAIN MEDS.
WHY IS HE HERE?
WAIT A MINUTE...
NEVER MIND THAT— I HAVE TO GO...
WAIT, WHERE AM I GOING?
WOW, FOREIGNERS ARE HUGE.
IF I DON'T HURRY, MY POT WILL BOIL OVER.
I NEED TO HURRY...
NEVER MIND THAT...

OH, PHEW...
IT WAS JUST MY IMAGINATION.

WAIT, DIDN'T I SELL THE HOUSE?

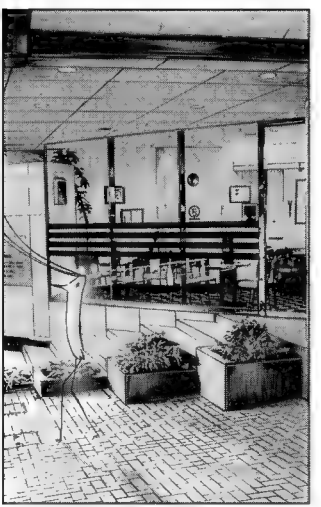

THIS CIGARETTE IS SERIOUSLY HARD TO LIGHT.
CALM DOWN, CALM DOWN... OKAY, I'LL HAVE A CIGARETTE.
I'M SO CONFUSED...
WAIT A MINUTE...
OH NO, MIDORI'S GOING TO YELL AT ME AGAIN.
NO SMOKING EXCEPT FOR DESIGNATED AREAS...
AREN'T I IN THE HOSPITAL?

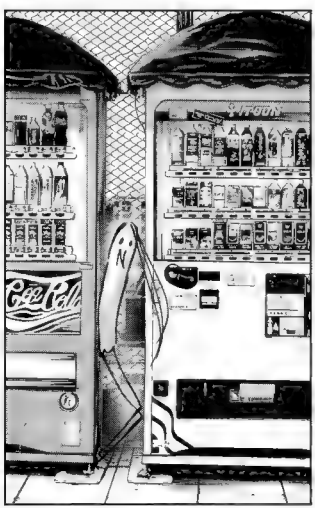
LOOK, LOOK, SIS...
IT'S A BLIMP!
OH, THANK GOODNESS! SHE'S NOT MAD!
IS THAT WHAT A BLIMP LOOKS LIKE?
BUT...


ONE OF THESE DAYS, WE SHOULD ALL GO AROUND THE WORLD...
...IN ONE OF THOSE.

...SUN AND WIND.
...SEA...
...SKY...
THERE'S LOTS OF...
WE'LL GO..
WHY CAN'T I GET ALONG WITH EVERYONE?

MIND
YOUR
IT
WILL
I'M
SURE
AND
FEEL
FILL
WITH
NOTHING
AMAZING.




SAIGON
Coca-Cola

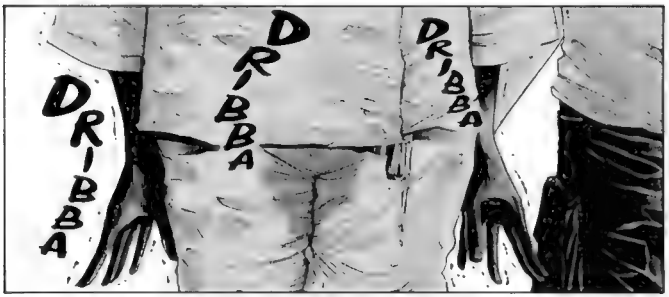
...
MA'AM
...
...
MA'AM!

MA'AM!
HELLO
...
...ARE
YOU ALL
RIGHT?

SOME-
BODY!
GET A
NURSE!
CALL ME
"MISS."
"MA'AM"?!

OH, THANK GOOD-NESS.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?
MRS. ONODERA ...
... WHAT HAP-PENED ?!
I TOLD YOU TO STAY IN BED.

LET'S START BY STANDING UP.
GRAB MY SHOULDER.
OKAY.
OH...


DRIBBA
DRIBBA
DRIBBA

CAN'T BELIEVE YOU SAW THAT... HOW EMBARRASSING...

NO ONE WILL MARRY ME NOW...
WELL, ACTUALLY, I'M ALREADY DIVORCED.
OH NO, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
WHEN I WAS HOSPITALIZED, I DIDN'T KNOW *WHAT* WAS GOING ON. I WAS A HUGE PAIN FOR THE NURSES.

HOW...
...DID YOU GET HURT?

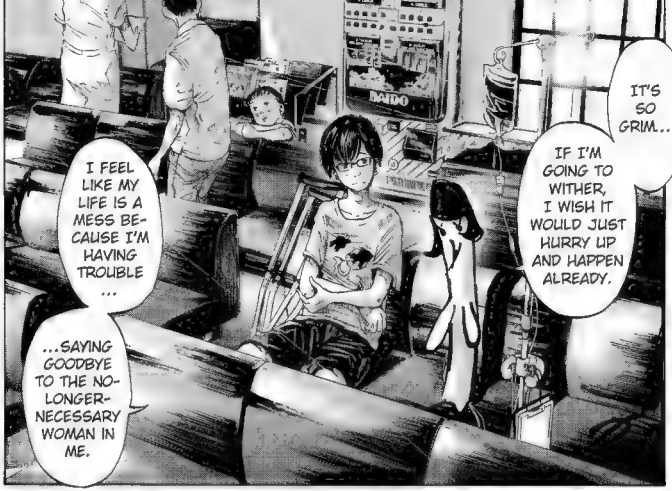
I ATE IT BIG-TIME.
FOR A SECOND, I SERIOUSLY THOUGHT, "I'M GOING TO DIE."

OH, *HEH HEH HEH.*
I HIT A CAR WITH MY BIKE ON THE WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL.

HEE HEE...
SO YOU'RE LUCKY TO GET OFF SO LIGHTLY.

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT...
I THINK I'LL HAVE TO QUIT THE SOCCER TEAM...
...BUT IT'S MADE ME DECIDE IT'S TIME TO START SERIOUSLY STUDYING.
OH...
WHAT IS IT?

HMMM...
YOU SUCK AT FLATTERY.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
DON'T WORRY.
OH, YOU'RE THE SAME AGE AS MY SON.
SO YOU'RE IN HIGH SCHOOL?
I'M 16. IT'S MY FIRST YEAR.
REALLY? WOW, YOU DON'T LOOK IT.


IT'S SO GRIM...
IF I'M GOING TO WITHER, I WISH IT WOULD JUST HURRY UP AND HAPPEN ALREADY.
I FEEL LIKE MY LIFE IS A MESS BECAUSE I'M HAVING TROUBLE ...
...SAYING GOODBYE TO THE NO-LONGER-NECESSARY WOMAN IN ME.

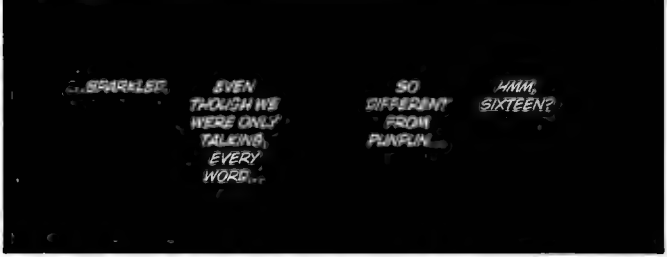
UM...
I'M HAPPY TO LISTEN IF YOU WANT TO TALK.
NO...
...THAT'S OKAY. I'D BETTER GET BACK TO MY ROOM.
YOU DON'T WANT TO HEAR THE LIFE STORY OF A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, DO YOU?
SORRY ABOUT THAT. JUST FORGET EVERY-THING I SAID.
OH, WHAT AM I EVEN SAYING?

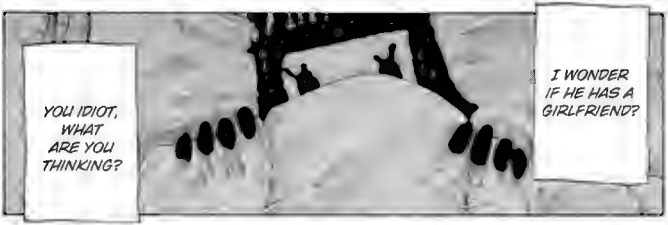
DO YOU WANT ME TO WALK WITH YOU?
NO, I'M FINE NOW. DON'T PUSH YOURSELF, OKAY?
SHIT...
WHAT AM I DOING?
UM...
...WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN?

I THINK SO.
I'LL DEFINITELY BE HERE TOMORROW AND THE DAY AFTER.

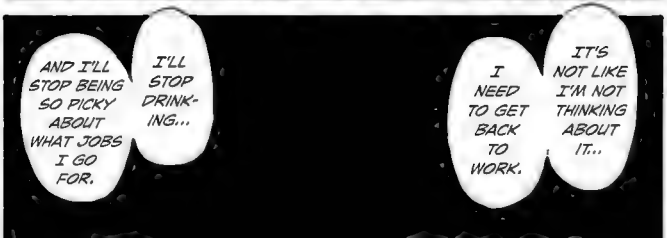
OH...
... AND ...
...WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

IT'S SHUNTARO ...
SHUNTARO HARUMI.


...SPARKLE.
EVEN THOUGH WE WERE ONLY TALKING, EVERY WORD...
SO DIFFERENT FROM PUNPUN...
HMM, SIXTEEN?


YOU IDIOT, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
I WONDER IF HE HAS A GIRLFRIEND?

I WANT TO MASTUR-BATE.
SIGH...


AND I'LL STOP BEING SO PICKY ABOUT WHAT JOBS I GO FOR.
I'LL STOP DRINK-ING...
I NEED TO GET BACK TO WORK.
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT IT...

I'M AFRAID TO GO BACK OUT THERE...
IF I GET BACK ON THAT HORSE, MAYBE I'LL JUST GET CHEWED UP AGAIN.
BUT YOU KNOW...
...TEN YEARS AGO, I WAS BUSTING MY ASS LIKE MY LIFE DEPENDED ON IT.
THIS ISN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE...
THIS IS NOT HOW IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE.
THIS ISN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE.
W-WHAT?
YOU WANTED TO BANG MORE MEN, WHILE YOU'RE AT IT?
I WANTED TO PLAY MORE.
YOU'RE JUST SPECU-LATING- DON'T BE STUPID.
STOP IT...
I WANTED TO SHOP MORE.

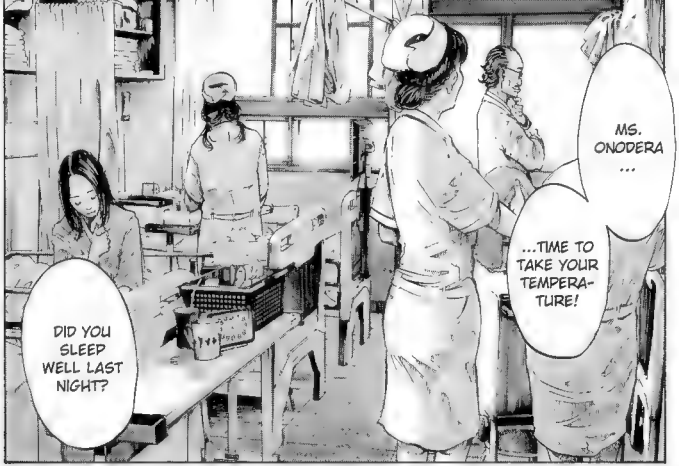
YEAH ...
I'M NOT THINKING STRAIGHT ...
UM, COULD I HAVE ANOTHER GLASS OF SAKE? JUST ONE MORE.
YOU KNOW ...
...LET'S SPLIT UP.
I'LL TAKE PUNPUN.
YOU ...
CAN YOU RAISE HIM ON YOUR OWN AND WORK FULL-TIME?
YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T EVEN WANT KIDS...
DO YOU REALLY THINK THE TWO OF YOU CAN MAKE IT ON YOUR OWN?
I DON'T KNOW ...
... BUT ...
...AT LEAST IF I'M BY MYSELF, I WON'T BE LONELY.
YOU ...!
HOW SELFISH CAN YOU BE?!

HEY ...
WAIT ...
HEY HEY HEY!
YOU ...
CALM DOWN!
HEY ...
ARE ...
I'M NOT GOING TO STAB YOU.
SHUT UP.
... YOU CRAZY ?!
... THEN MYSELF.
I'M GOING TO KILL PUNPUN ...

URR URR URR URR URR URR URRR!
THEN KILL ME!
ARR ...
ARR!
ARR, ARR ...
KILL ME, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW!
...ARR ARR ARR ARR ARR ARRGH!
THIS ISN'T WHAT I WANTED.
HURRY UP AND FIGURE IT OUT...
... PAPA.

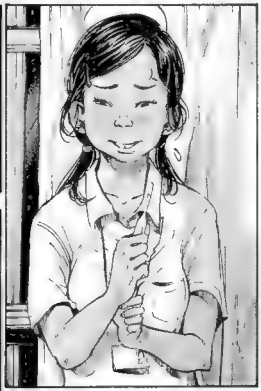
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
YOU WERE SO STEADFAST BACK THEN.
"LET'S BUILD A HAPPY HOME HERE, THE THREE OF US."
REMEMBER, A LONG TIME AGO YOU SAID...
I DON'T WANT LUXURIES LIKE THAT NOW.
THE WORDS I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU...
...AREN'T THAT HARD.

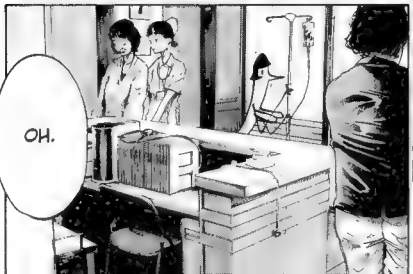
TELL ME, "IT WILL BE OKAY."
TELL ME, "I'M SORRY."
PUNPUN ...
I HAVE BAD NEWS...
THERE WAS A BURGLAR.
TELL ME...
"I LOVE YOU."


DID YOU SLEEP WELL LAST NIGHT?
MS. ONODERA ...
...TIME TO TAKE YOUR TEMPERA-TURE!

THE WORST.

WHY CAN'T I FORGET?
IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS...




OH.

MS. ONODERA!

I DIDN'T KNOW A BROKEN LEG WAS SOME-THING...
... SERIOUS ENOUGH TO COME IN FOR EVERY DAY.
WELL, LUCKY FOR ME...
KIDDING, KIDDING!

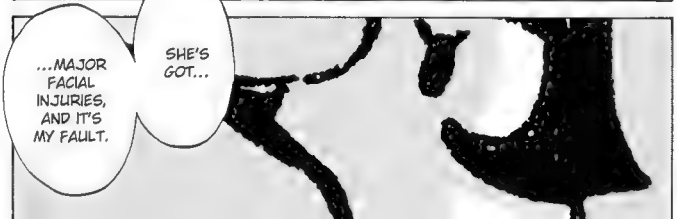
WELL, UM...
...I'M NOT REALLY HERE TO GET IT LOOKED AT.

REMEMBER YESTERDAY I TOLD YOU I GOT HURT WHEN I HIT A CAR ON MY BIKE?
HMM?
...IN HEARING A KID'S LIFE STORY?
DO YOU HAVE ANY INTEREST ...
ACTU-ALLY, THERE WERE TWO OF US.
MY GIRL-FRIEND WAS ON THE BACK OF MY BIKE.
HER INJURIES ARE WORSE THAN MINE. IT'S SERIOUS.
SHE'S STILL HERE, IN THE HOSPITAL...

Chapter 60

WHAT?
WHY?
NO, IT'S ...
I HAVEN'T SEEN HER YET.
...THAT YOU COME SEE HER EVERY DAY.
IT'S SWEET...

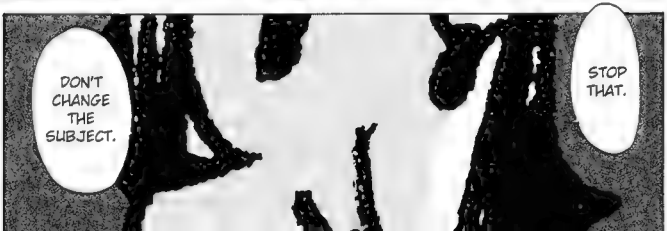
I'M REALLY SCARED.
I'M NOT SURE WHAT I SHOULD FEEL WHEN I SEE HER.


SHE'S GOT...
...MAJOR FACIAL INJURIES, AND IT'S MY FAULT.

SHE'S MY FIRST GIRL-FRIEND.
WE'VE ONLY BEEN GOING OUT FOR ABOUT A MONTH.
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO TRY RIDING TWO ON A BIKE.
SHE TRIED TO GET ME TO STOP BECAUSE SHE SAID IT WAS DAN-GEROUS...
...BUT I WANTED TO SHOW OFF, SO I WENT REALLY FAST.

AND THEN...
...A CAR TURNED OFF A SIDE STREET, AND I HAD A SECOND TO THINK, "OH CRAP."
WHEN I CAME TO, I WAS LYING ON THE GROUND...
...AND I COULD HEAR HER CRYING SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY FROM ME.

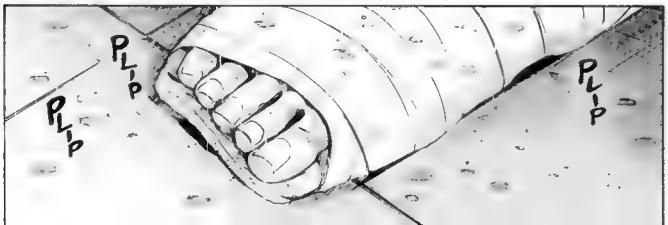
LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT IT ANYMORE.
TELL ME MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT YESTERDAY.
HOW YOU MET YOUR HUSBAND ...
YOU WERE TRAVELING IN ITALY AND SNUCK INTO A SWINGERS' PARTY?


STOP THAT.
DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT.

GO APOLOGIZE TO HER.
YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO HANG AROUND OUT HERE.
BUT...
...NO APOLOGY COULD BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR HER TO FORGIVE ME.
IS HER FORGIVING YOU THE IMPORTANT THING HERE?
YOU THINK YOU'RE BEING SENSITIVE BY LEAVING HER ALONE, BUT MAYBE YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO PROTECT YOURSELF.
MAYBE YOU'RE THINKING, "WHY ME?"
I'M NOT LIKE THAT.

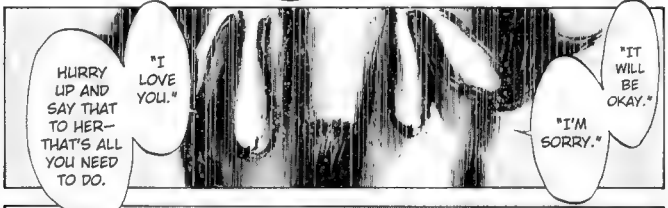
BUT...
...WHAT IF...
WELL, THEN!

...SHE HATES ME?
THEN I'M GOING TO BE A WRECK, I KNOW IT.


PLIP
PLIP
PLIP

LISTEN TO YOU...
"BUT," "IF," "THEN"...
WHY ARE YOU WORRYING ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET?
WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS *NOW*.
NOW CONNECTS TO THE FUTURE.
MS. ONODERA ...

YOU CAN'T POSSI-BLY...
...UNDER-STAND WHAT I'M FEELING.


"I LOVE YOU."
HURRY UP AND SAY THAT TO HER— THAT'S ALL YOU NEED TO DO.
"I'M SORRY."
"IT WILL BE OKAY."

UNTIL YOU DO, YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE TORMENTED.
YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING YET, SHUNTARO ...

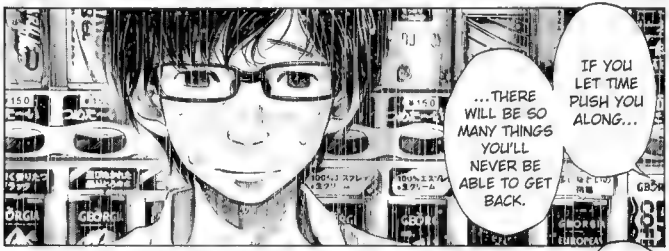
OH NO...
MS. ONODERA IS GONE AGAIN.
DAMMIT, WILL YOU ALL GO LOOK FOR HER?
SHE HASN'T CHANGED A BIT.
WAS SHE IN FOR PNEUMO-THORAX THEN TOO?
OH, HAS MS. ONODERA BEEN HERE BEFORE?
YEAH, SHE JUMPED OFF THE FIRE ESCAPE AND HAD EVERYONE IN A PANIC.
NO, NO...
... DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

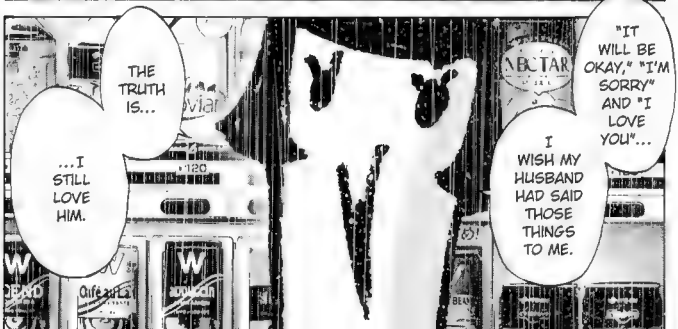
...IT'S JUST A BOY THING.
SO I GUESS...
SHUNTARO HAD THE SAME LOOK IN HIS EYES AS PUNPUN.

WHOA, ONOTTI...
GREAT TIMING, REALLY GREAT!
IT'S POURING— LET ME GET UNDER YOUR UMBRELLA.

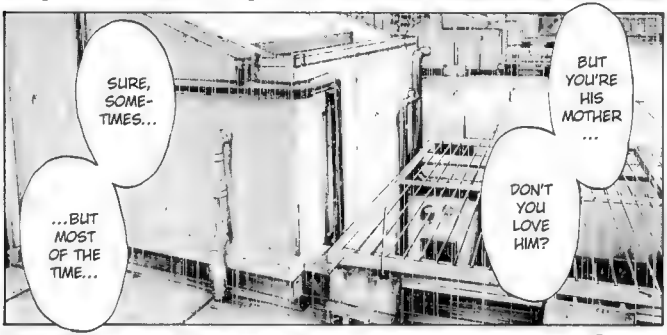
I'M SORRY ...
IT'S JUST THAT ...
...MY EX-HUSBAND BEAT ME...

LOOKING BACK, IT FEELS LIKE AN ACCIDENT...
...BUT ALSO LIKE AN INEVITABILITY.
WHATEVER THE REASON...
...ALL I HAVE LEFT IS NOW.


IF YOU LET TIME PUSH YOU ALONG...
...THERE WILL BE SO MANY THINGS YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GET BACK.

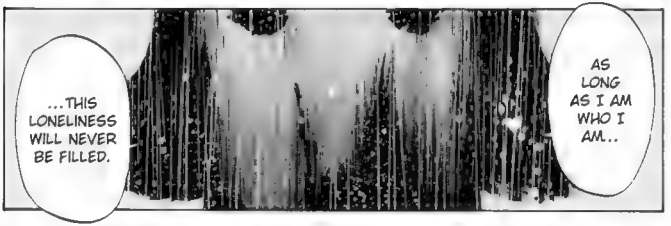

"IT WILL BE OKAY," "I'M SORRY" AND "I LOVE YOU"...
I WISH MY HUSBAND HAD SAID THOSE THINGS TO ME.
THE TRUTH IS...
...I STILL LOVE HIM.

NOT AT ALL...
WE REALLY DON'T GET ALONG.
DON'T YOU TALK ABOUT THIS STUFF WITH YOUR SON?
I HAVE MY PRIDE.
BUT WE'LL NEVER GET BACK TOGETHER ...


SURE, SOME-TIMES...
...BUT MOST OF THE TIME...
DON'T YOU LOVE HIM?
BUT YOU'RE HIS MOTHER ...

...IT'S LIKE HE EMBODIES ALL OUR NEGATIVE ASPECTS, AND I JUST REALLY DISLIKE HIM.
HE'S A PART OF ME AND MY HUSBAND, BUT...
...I LOATHE HIM.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND ANOTHER PERSON...
...IF THE DESIRE TO CONNECT ISN'T THERE, IT WON'T WORK...
...EVEN IF YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THEY'RE FEELING.
AND THE OLDER YOU GET, THE LONGER THE LIST GROWS OF THINGS YOU CAN'T COMPROMISE ON.


AS LONG AS I AM WHO I AM...
...THIS LONELINESS WILL NEVER BE FILLED.

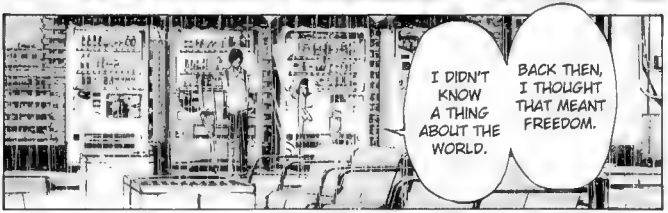
RAIN, WHAT A DOWNER.
SHOULD WE JUST GO HOME AND WORK OUT?

HEY, AREN'T THOSE GIRLS FROM OUR CLASS?
YEAH, TOTALLY.

YOUNG MART
WARA
HEY, HEY, HEY, CUTIES!
IT'S FRIDAY! LET'S ALL ROLL ON DOWN FOR SOME KARAOKE!
IT'S MIMURA ...
HEY, PEOPLE ARE SAYING YOU'RE JUST A POSER AND A VIRGIN.

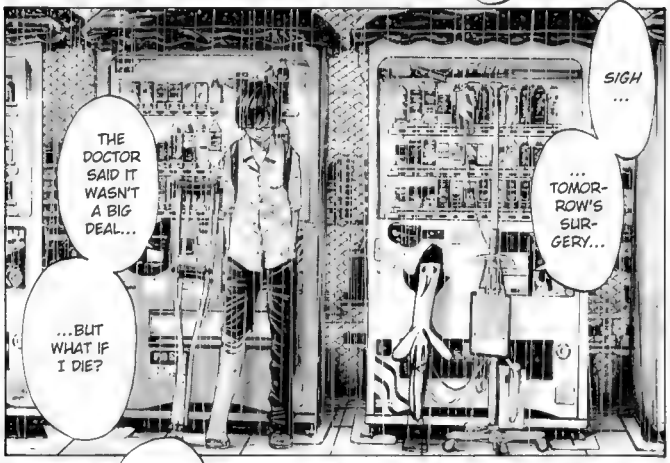
NOT TRUE. WANT TO SEE MY GLISTENING TROUSER UZI?
THAT'S JUST GROSS. LET'S GO.

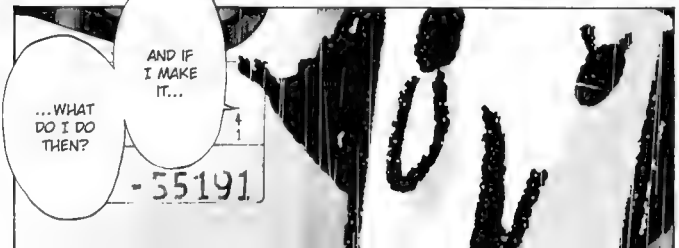
I DIDN'T GO TO THE FUNERAL, AND NO ONE SAID A WORD ABOUT IT.
MY FATHER AND BROTHER HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT I WAS A COLD FISH.
MY MOTHER DIED OF BREAST CANCER WHILE I WAS TRAVELING OVERSEAS.
WE NEVER GOT ALONG, BUT MY LACK OF GRIEF WAS SUCH AN ANTICLIMAX.


I DIDN'T KNOW A THING ABOUT THE WORLD.
BACK THEN, I THOUGHT THAT MEANT FREEDOM.

I FIGURED EVEN IF I *COULD*, I'D BE INSIGNIFI-CANT...
MAYBE I WAS WAITING FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO FIND ME.
NOW IT'S CALLED "FINDING YOUR-SELF"...
...BUT I WASN'T TRYING TO FIND MYSELF.

AND EVEN NOW...
...I HAVE NOWHERE TO BE.
BASI-CALLY...
...I WAS RUNNING AWAY BECAUSE I DIDN'T HAVE ANY-WHERE TO BE.


THE DOCTOR SAID IT WASN'T A BIG DEAL...
...BUT WHAT IF I DIE?
SIGH ...
... TOMOR-ROW'S SUR-GERY...

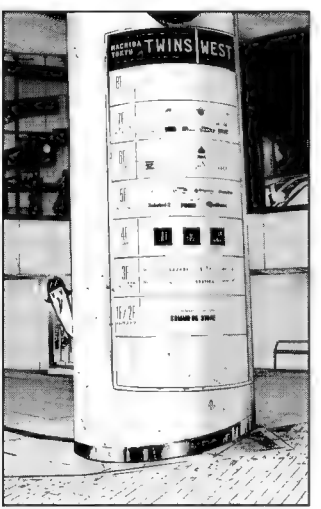

AND IF I MAKE IT...
...WHAT DO I DO THEN?
-55191

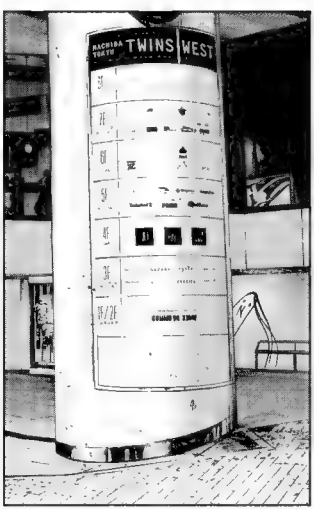
...WHAT IF THE POINT OF MY LIFE IS TO RUN AWAY FROM MOMENTARY ANXIETY AND LONELINESS...?
...LIKE SHELTERING HERE FROM THE RAIN.
WHAT IF...
HOW INCREDIBLY SAD.

MS. ONODERA.
DON'T...

...CRY.

OKAY.


MACHIDA TOKYO
TWINS
WEST

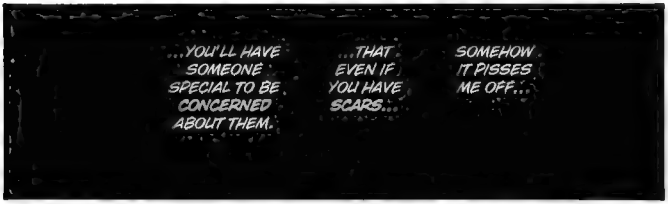

TWINS
WEST

OH SHIT!
I JUST FUCKED UP THIS INCISION.
WHOA, THERE'S SOME WEIRD FLUID IN HERE. WHAT IS THAT?
SERIOUSLY, HER BLOOD PRESSURE KEEPS DROPPING, AND IT'S HILARIOUS.
UH, DOCTOR, SHE'S BLEEDING OUT HERE.
WELL, PUT A BAND-AID ON IT! IT'LL GET BETTER EVENTUALLY.
ON AN ORGAN?
WAIT, IS SHE AWAKE?
DUCT-TAPE HER EYES SHUT.
AHH, I'M BORED OF SURGERY ...
I WANT TO GO HOME AND PLAY MY PLAYSTATION.
HEY, GUYS, TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY.
JUST WAIT A MINUTE.
WAIT ...
NO! HEY ...
HEY, WHO DO YOU WANT TO INVITE TO THE PARTY NEXT WEEK?

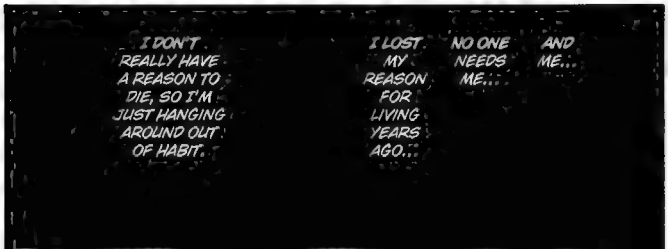
GASP!
JUST A DREAM.
UM ...
...ARE YOU OKAY?

SHOULD I CALL...
...A NURSE?
OH.
"SHE'S GOT MAJOR FACIAL INJURIES..."
UM...
CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING?
SHE'S SHUNTARO'S GIRLFRIEND.
HOW DID YOU GET HURT?
SORRY.
NO...
THAT'S OKAY. I'M FINE.

IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL...
I'M GETTING OUT SOON.
THE SURGEON TOLD ME...
...I'LL PROBABLY HAVE SCARS FROM THE STITCHES THOUGH.


...YOU'LL HAVE SOMEONE SPECIAL TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THEM.
...THAT EVEN IF YOU HAVE SCARS...
SOMEHOW IT PISSES ME OFF...

I'M SURE YOU'LL BE FINE.
MEDICAL SCIENCE HAS MADE SO MUCH PROGRESS LATELY. I'M SURE YOU'LL HAVE A COMPLETE RECOVERY.

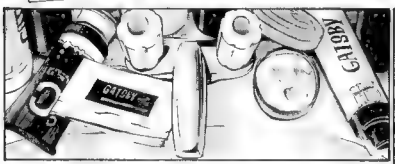

I DON'T REALLY HAVE A REASON TO DIE, SO I'M JUST HANGING AROUND OUT OF HABIT.
I LOST MY REASON FOR LIVING YEARS AGO...
NO ONE NEEDS ME...
AND ME...

BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE...
IT WAS JUST BAD LUCK.
I...
...HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.
EVERYONE CAN JUST DIE!
ADULTS, CHILDREN, MEN AND WOMEN... ME...
IF YOU CAN'T COPE, JUST DIE!
EVERYONE IS SO FUCKING DEPRESSING...
WHAT IS THIS...?
WHAT...
THAT...
...THAT'S NOT...
UM...
YOU KNOW.
...AND I HOPE I CAN BE A LITTLE HAPPIER THAN I AM NOW.
I HOPE ALL PEOPLE ON EARTH CAN BE HAPPY...
OH GOD, I PROMISE IT WAS A LIE, SO PLEASE DON'T THROW ME INTO HELL!
I DIDN'T MEAN IT...
I LIED...

DON'T LET THIS GET YOU DOWN...
THERE'S SO MUCH FUN WAITING FOR YOU WHEN YOU GROW UP.
...ARE COMPLETELY MEANING-LESS...
THESE INSINCERE WORDS...
WHAT THE HELL AM I SAYING?
OH..
...THANK YOU.
OH.
...YOU GET BETTER SOON TOO.
I HOPE...

...WITH KIND ONES.
SHE'S REPAID MY IDIOTIC WORDS...
...THERE IT IS...
OH...
I'M SURE SOMETHING WONDERFUL WILL HAPPEN...
...AFTER YOUR OPERATION TOMORROW.
I DON'T WANT YOUR SYMPATHY!
STOP IT.
...IT'S NICE.
BUT...

OKINAWA'S RAINY SEASON HAS STARTED EARLIER THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS, AND THE KYUSHU REGION HAS FOLLOWED...
18:52
THIS WEEKEND THE KANTO AND TOHOKU AREAS WILL HAVE SPORADIC RAIN SHOWERS.


GATSBY
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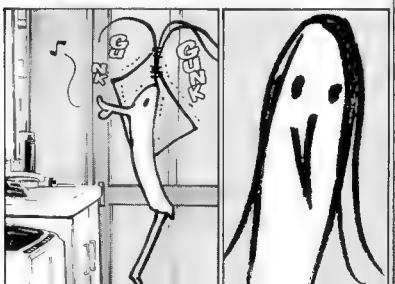
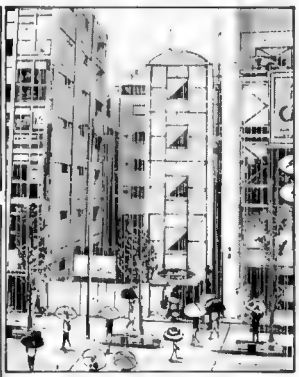
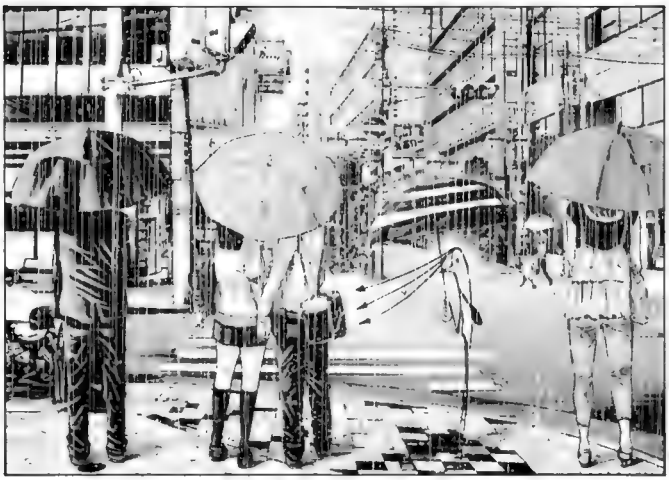

GEN.

It's A Miracle!!

Ahh!
Oh!
Oh, Yeah!





4F
3F
1F
BAR
SAZAHI
COM
OH.
GOOD MORNING, ONODERA ...
YOU'RE 15 MINUTES EARLY.

HMMM...
MY SISTER'S GOING TO BE A LITTLE LATE.
WE BOTH GOT HERE A LITTLE TOO EARLY...
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
...KILL SOME TIME?
SHOULD WE GO...

OKAY, MS. ONODERA ...
...WE'RE GOING TO MOVE YOU TO THE OTHER BED.
ON THREE.
OSPITAL

UM...
PLEASE TAKE GOOD CARE OF MY SISTER-IN-LAW.
MIDORI ...
... WHERE'S PUNPUN?
I'M SORRY, I JUST ASSUMED HE WAS COMING ON HIS OWN, SO I DIDN'T GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM.

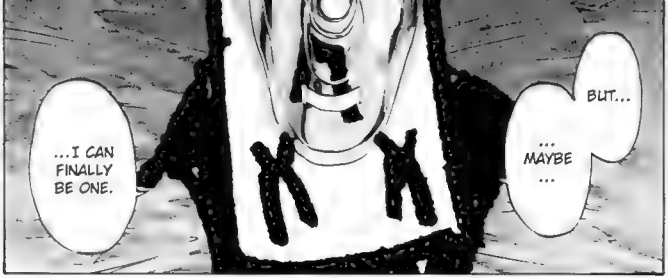
OH...
... THAT'S OKAY.
I WAS JUST ASKING.

HEY...
... NURSE.

THERE'S ...
...A BOY WHO I'M REALLY INTERESTED IN RIGHT NOW.

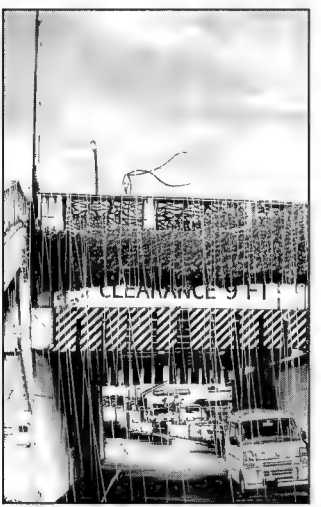
OKAY ...
...WHEN THIS OPERATION'S OVER, I WANT TO TELL HIM HOW I FEEL.
IT'S NOT LIKE I WANT TO GO OUT WITH HIM OR ANY-THING...
... BUT ...
LOOKING BACK ON THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS...
...I'VE BEEN PROTECTING MYSELF BY PROVOKING OTHER PEOPLE.

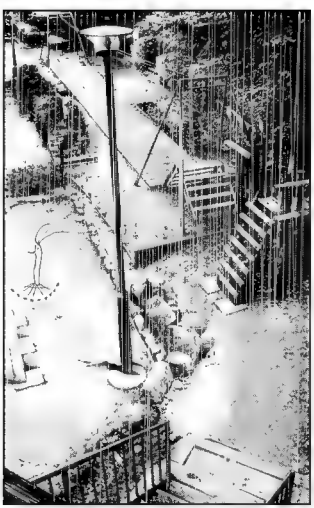
NO...
...THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MEN AND WOMEN...
LOVE IS STRANGE ...
YOU BECOME MORE SENSITIVE TO THE KINDNESS OF OTHERS ...
...AND YOU BECOME A BIT KINDER YOURSELF.
EVEN IF YOU'VE BEEN ...
...BETRAYED AND HURT...
...NEVER FORGET WHAT LETS YOU LOVE.
BY LOVING LOTS OF PEOPLE...
...AND RECEIVING LOTS OF KINDNESS...
...ONE DAY ALL THE SCARS WILL JUST DISAPPEAR.
BUT...
...AFTER THIS, MAYBE IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON FROM SUCH RISKY LOVE.
HEE HEE...
...AFTER ALL, I'M MIDDLE-AGED NOW.


...I CAN FINALLY BE ONE.
BUT...
...
MAYBE
...

MAYBE I CAN FINALLY BE A GOOD...
...
MOTHER.

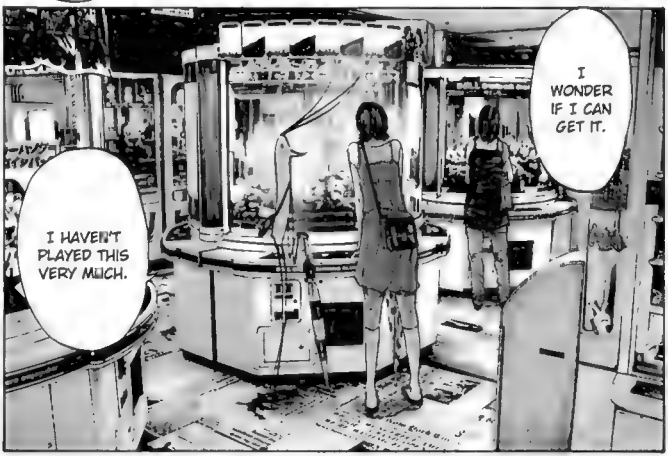
RECYCLE

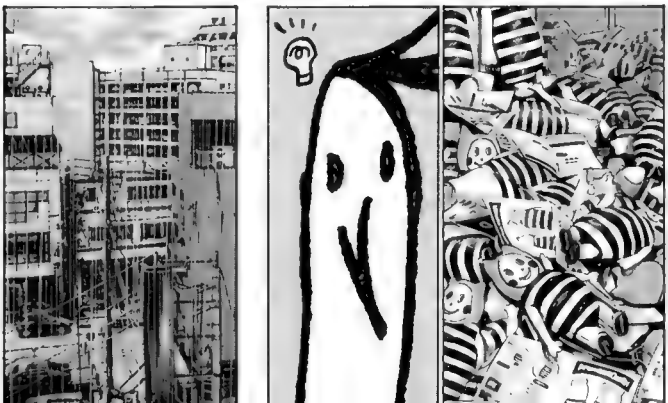

CLEARANCE 9 FT



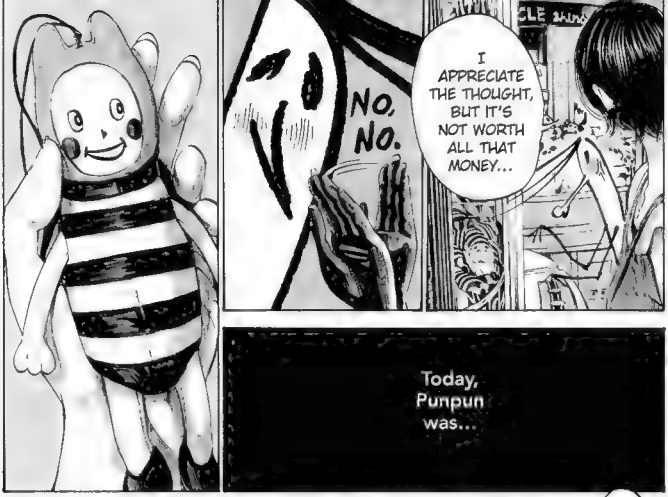
Chapter 62

WHAT'S THAT...?
IT'S SO CUTE.

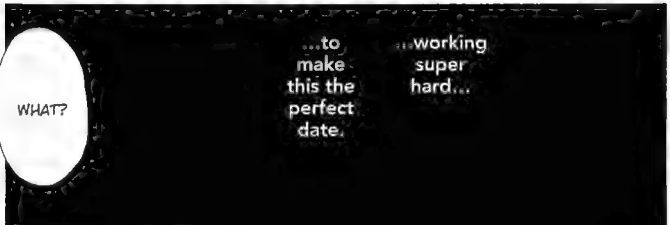

I WONDER IF I CAN GET IT.
I HAVEN'T PLAYED THIS VERY MUCH.



ONO-DERA...
IT'S OKAY. YOU DON'T NEED TO KEEP TRYING


NO. NO.
I APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT, BUT IT'S NOT WORTH ALL THAT MONEY...
Today, Punpun was...

NEW ARRIVAL!
Chupa Chup
CANDY COUNTRY
CANDY COUNTRY
NO. NO.
REALLY, I PROMISE TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!
UMM ...
SORRY ABOUT THAT.


WHAT?
...to make this the perfect date.
...working super hard...

NO, NO...
...I CAN PAY FOR MYSELF.
ACTUALLY, I'LL COVER EVERYTHING ELSE, SINCE YOU PAID FOR THE ARCADE.

NO, NO.
NO,

ERRM...
I'LL PAY YOU BACK ANOTHER TIME.
YOU KNOW...
...IT'S ONLY BEEN TWO MONTHS SINCE WE STARTED HIGH SCHOOL, BUT IT'S GOING BY SO QUICKLY.
MIDTERMS JUST ENDED, AND MY HEAD'S ALREADY FULL OF FINALS!

I BET NEXT THING I KNOW, IT'LL BE TIME FOR COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS...
I WONDER IF EVERYONE ELSE IS SECRETLY PREPPING ALREADY?
I NEED TO FIND A GOOD PREP SCHOOL.
HAVE YOU DECIDED WHICH ONE YOU'RE GOING TO?
HMM...
...ARE YOU LISTENING?
WHAT?
THAT'S A COMPLETE NON SEQUITUR.
"What do you like to do on your days off?" Punpun parried with an original topic. He's on fire!
UMM, WELL...

THERE ARE LOTS OF PLACES IN THE WORLD WHERE PEOPLE ARE POOR AND LACK VITAL SERVICES.
I WANT TO VOLUNTEER OVERSEAS...
I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE BORN IN AN AFFLUENT COUNTRY LIKE JAPAN, SO I WANT TO TRY AND HELP.
...BUT I'M STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO IT.

COMMUNICATION IS SO IMPORTANT WHEN YOU'RE WORKING WITH PEOPLE, DON'T YOU THINK?
SO I'M TEACHING MYSELF ENGLISH.

"Watch TV, play video games."
After much thought ...
...was all he could come up with.
...WHAT DO YOU DO?
SO HOW ABOUT YOU, ONO-DERA ...
Punpun had no reply for such an unexpectedly serious answer.

"...without an ounce of principles!"

"That makes me look unbelievably lowbrow...

GET ALL THE WAY UNDER HERE.
YOUR BAG IS GOING TO GET SOAKED.
YOU'RE REALLY NICE, ONO-DERA.
I APPRECI-ATE YOUR CONCERN, BUT...
NO...
...NEVER MIND.

SORRY, I'M HAVING TROUBLE SAYING WHAT I MEAN.
I ONLY HAVE SISTERS, SO I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND BOYS.
I KIND OF GET MIMURA...
...BUT I FIND YOU HARD TO READ, ONODERA.

...and unworthy.

...guilty...

They weren't really connecting, which was a little irritating and was making him feel...

Punpun felt the same about her.

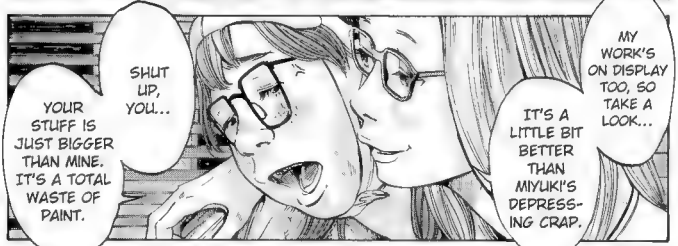
It was such a fierce stiffy that Punpun decided to call it an **ultra hard-on.**

Plus, he was worried that Kanie would notice the raging boner he'd been sporting for the last couple of hours.

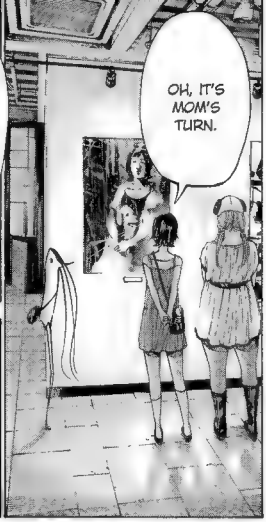
AZUSA!
OVER HERE!
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
I TOLD YOU NOT TO BE LATE.
IT WASN'T MY FAULT. NANJO WAS SUPER LATE.

HEY, AZUSA, IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
I HEARD YOU GOT INTO HIGH SCHOOL 1 TOO...
GOOD FOR YOU, SMARTY.
SACHI, YOU'VE CHANGED YOUR LOOK. NO MORE BLACK FRAMES?
HUH?
HEY, HEY, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?!
LOOKS LIKE YOUR LITTLE SISTER LOST HER VIRGINITY FIRST.
I DON'T NEED TO HEAR THAT FROM A SLUTTY CYBORG LIKE YOU.
UM...
...WE'RE JUST FRIENDS FROM SCHOOL--DON'T GET AHEAD OF YOURSELVES.

THIS IS MY SISTER MIYUKI...
...AND HER FRIEND FROM HIGH SCHOOL SACHI NANJO.
OH, SORRY, ONODERA ...
LET ME INTRO-DUCE YOU.


SHUT UP, YOU...
YOUR STUFF IS JUST BIGGER THAN MINE. IT'S A TOTAL WASTE OF PAINT.
MY WORK'S ON DISPLAY TOO, SO TAKE A LOOK...
IT'S A LITTLE BIT BETTER THAN MIYUKI'S DEPRESS-ING CRAP.

PAY NO ATTENTION TO THEM. THEY'RE ALWAYS LIKE THIS.
No
No
No
MOTHER
MIYUKI KANJI



...it was hard for Punpun to describe how he felt about the painting.

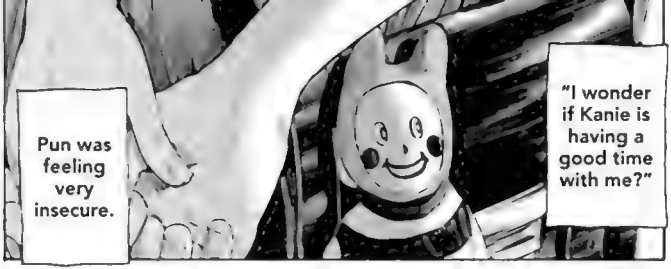
Truthfully...

Punpun didn't know anymore.

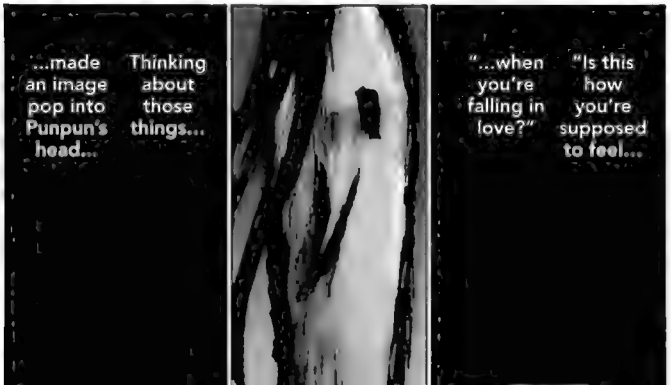
If he said that, would it make things all right?

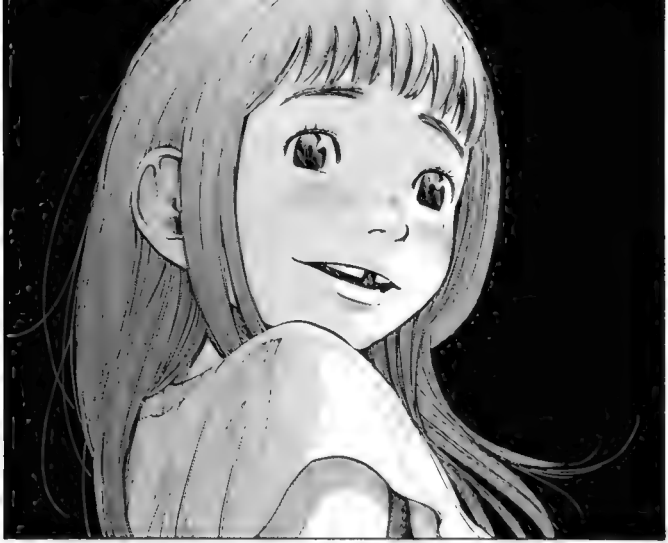
"Families are the best, baby-baby! ☆"

"That's exactly how I feel!

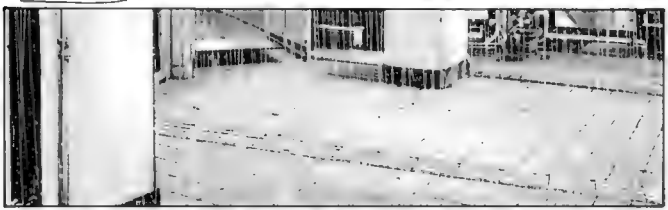

Pun was feeling very insecure.
"I wonder if Kanie is having a good time with me?"

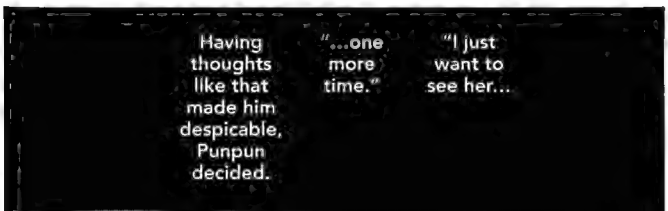
He was losing confi-dence.
"What do I like about Kanie...?"


...made an image pop into Punpun's head...
Thinking about those things...
"...when you're falling in love?"
"Is this how you're supposed to feel...



...from back then.
...of Aiko...



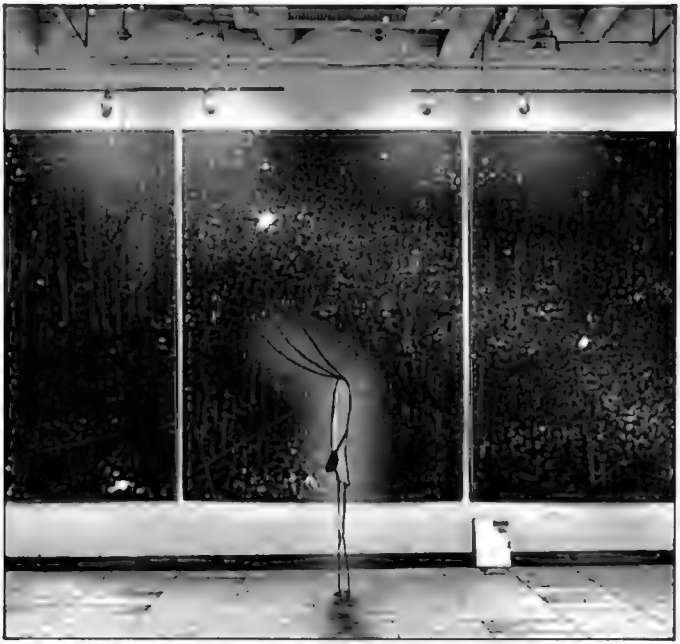

Having thoughts like that made him despicable, Punpun decided.
"...one more time."
"I just want to see her..."

MILKY WAY

SACHI NANJO

Punpun felt sure...

...he'd seen that sky before.



It was when he was in elementary school...

...on the way home from exploring the miso factory with his friends.

That big, big night sky full of stars...

The painting looked just like that.

"...and is still sparkling."

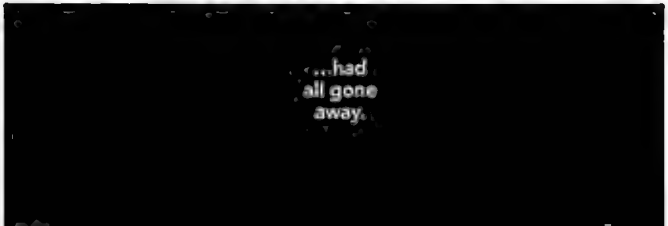
"...hasn't changed since then...

"I bet that night's starry sky...

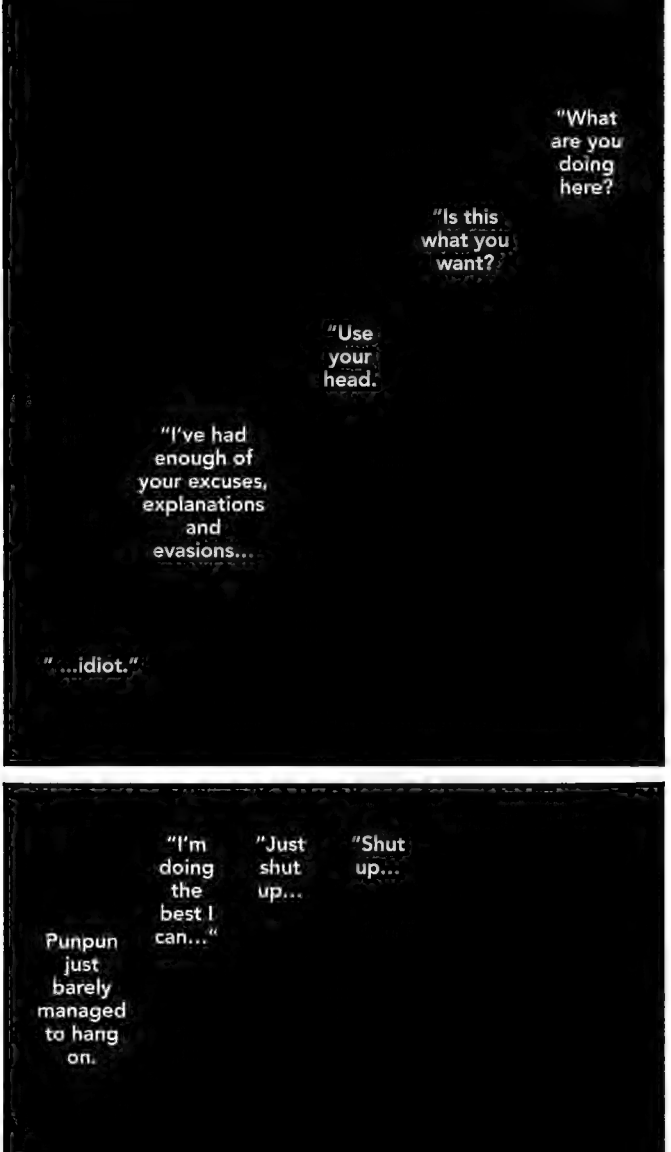
Punpun idly thought...

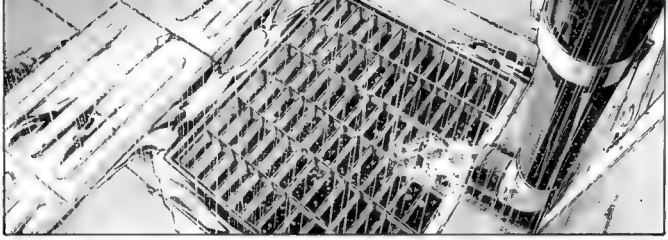
But...
...
Harumin
...
...and
Komatsu
...
...and
Shimi...
...and
Seki...

...and
Aiko...


...had
all gone
away.

With an arbitrary hard-on.
"I'm on a first date with a girl I'm not comfortable with.
Punpun thought...
"Why am I working so hard when she doesn't even notice?"
"Do I really think I'll get lucky and she'll let me put the tip in?"
"What am I doing here?
Lazily, slowly letting things happen.
This was just the result of going with the flow...
Surely he wasn't thinking anything...
He didn't know...
As a little kid, could he have ever imagined that this was how he was going to turn out?
Punpun was having trouble breathing...
...that Punpun was steadily becoming sleazier.
...but it seemed unfair...
...would probably still sparkle in the past, present and future...
The starry sky he saw that night...
...and he thought again...

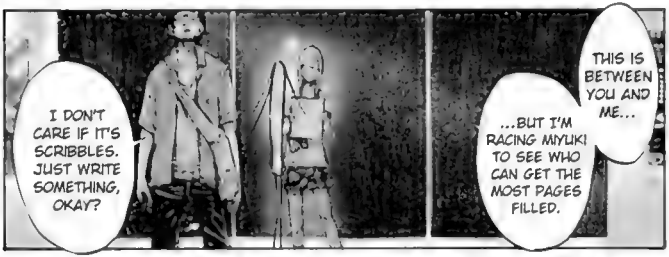

"What are you doing here?
"Is this what you want?
"Use your head.
"I've had enough of your excuses, explanations and evasions...
"...idiot."
Punpun just barely managed to hang on.
"I'm doing the best I can..."
"Just shut up...
"Shut up...



ZSSSSSSH

WELL ...
I HAVE NO COMMENT ABOUT WASTES OF PAINT.
THIS IS...
...MY PAINTING.
I THINK GETTING CAUGHT UP IN THE PAST IS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, AND I DON'T LIKE IT.
...AND THIS YEAR IS "MEMORIES OF MY TEENS."
THIS ALUMNI EXHIBIT ALWAYS HAS A THEME...
UM, HOW SHOULD I PHRASE THIS?
WITHOUT GETTING PERSONAL ...
...BUT HONESTLY ...
...IT'S A LITTLE WEIRD THAT YOU'RE CRYING.
...I'M GLAD YOU SEEM TO BE CONNECTING WITH IT...

NO ONE'S WRITTEN IN IT YET.
YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE PIECE.
OH YEAH, WOULD YOU MIND WRITING IT DOWN?


I DON'T CARE IF IT'S SCRIBBLES. JUST WRITE SOMETHING, OKAY?
...BUT I'M RACING MIYUKI TO SEE WHO CAN GET THE MOST PAGES FILLED.
THIS IS BETWEEN YOU AND ME...

...SO BE GENTLE WITH HER.
AZUSA IS A VIRGIN...
AND FYI...

GO FOR IT, YOUNG MAN!

...had no idea what to write.

Punpun...

... ensnared in memories of the past.

He was counter-productively...

Looking back, he couldn't tell how much of it he'd really meant...

He'd definitely been a little off as a kid, he thought.

Win a Nobel Prize and emigrate to Planet Punpun...

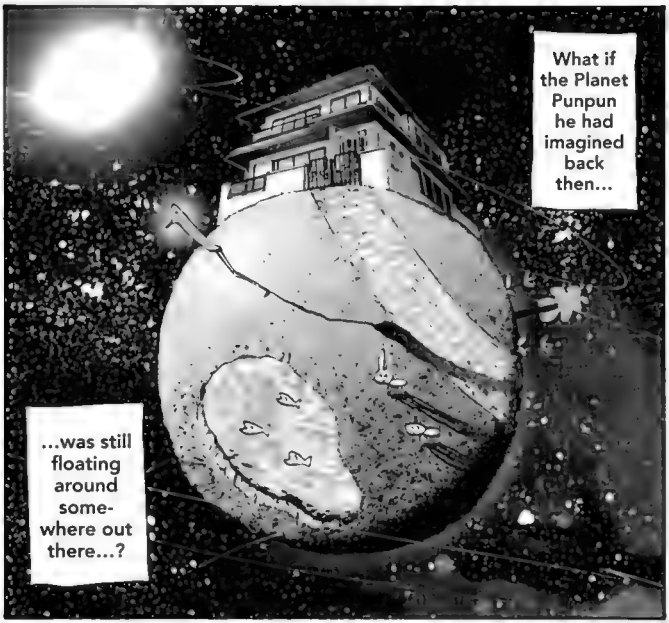
Become an academic who studies the universe...

He also thought he had become very boring.

...a near-miraculous probability...

...and this really was a what-if...

But, what if...



He's pretty much a shit.

...thinking about things like that in high school...

He must really be a little off...

Yeah, right.

If he could become truly crazy...

...it might make things a little more fun, Punpun thought.

IT MAY SURPRISE YOU, BUT I THINK I'M HOTTER THAN YOU ARE.

REGISTRATION

DIE.

"Well, as long as I'm a shit...

"...how about this story, titled 'The Milky Way.'"

I am a normal boy who lives many universes away.

One day I was really depressed about going to school.

It was love at first sight.

But several days later, a girl from a faraway star transferred to our school.

It was because Miyo, the classroom idol, was transferring.

For instance, something like this.

The grown-up me floats aimlessly through the Milky Way, looking for what I lost.

But over time, I lost sight of her.

I thought that, whatever happened, I had to protect her.

I was just convinced that she was my fate.

There was no reason for it.

"...to these stupid stories." Punpun felt like crying.

"There is no end...

WOW ...
...YOU'RE WRITING A TON.
THAT'S SACHI'S BOOK, RIGHT?
HEY, LET ME SEE IT.
NO, NO.
EEEE.
DRAWING BLOCK
HMMM...

DRAWING BLOCK
WANT TO GO?
MAYBE ...
...THIS WAS BORING

Punpun's sentimentality was so shallow.
Really ...
IT'S GETTING HEAVIER AND HEAVIER.
THE RAIN ...

The relentless rain...

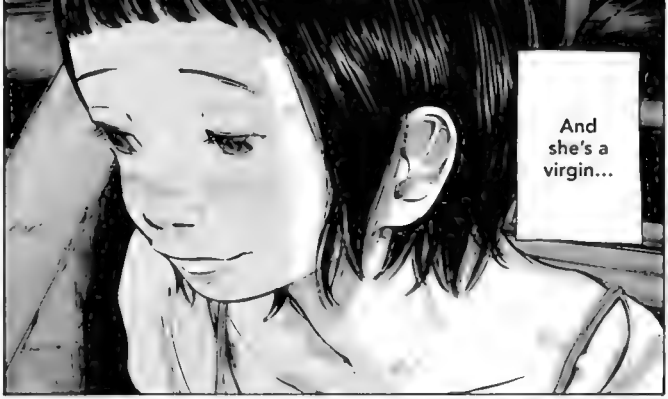
...brought Punpun back to reality in a hurry.

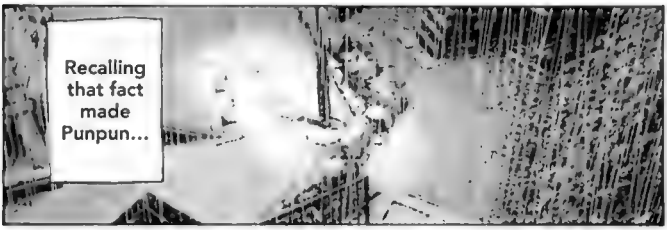
Kanie is a very serious, nice person...

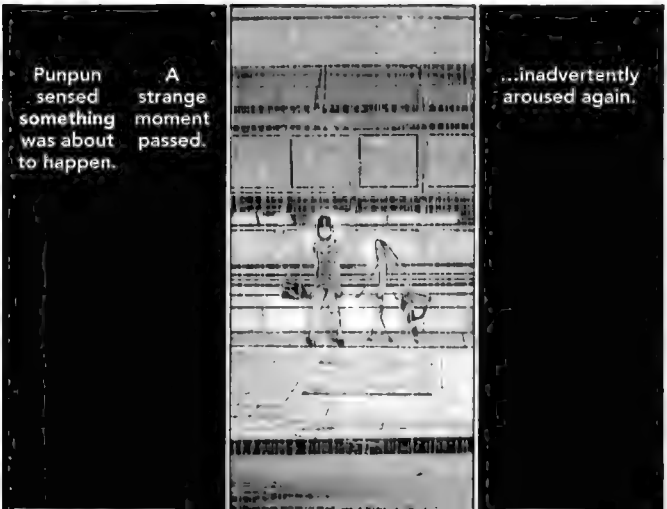
She really, really is.

...DO YOU WANT TO GO SOMEWHERE?

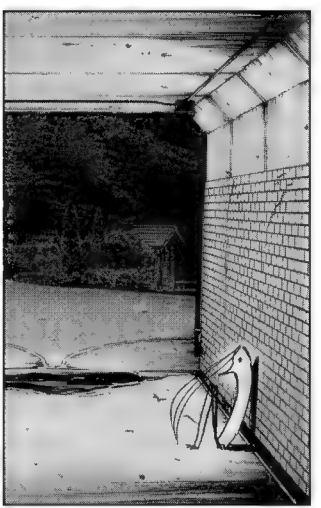
WHEN THE WEATHER'S BETTER...


And she's a virgin...


Recalling that fact made Punpun...


Punpun sensed something was about to happen.
A strange moment passed.
...inadvertently aroused again.

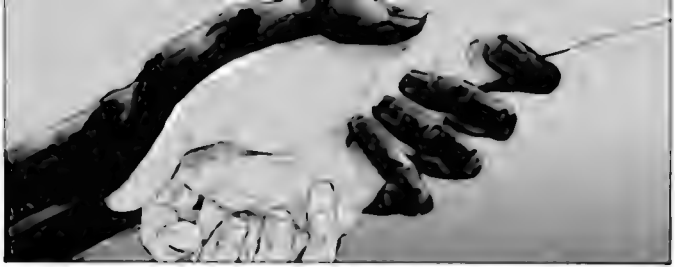
OKAY.
I'M GOING TO GO HOME.
MY MOM WORRIES IF I'M OUT TOO LATE.
WHAAAT?!



No! Huh? But! Umm!
WE'RE BOTH GOING TO BE REALLY BUSY STUDYING ...
...BUT BY THE TIME FINALS ARE OVER, THE RAINY SEASON WILL BE TOO.
Whoa! What? W- Wait!

LET'S GET TOGETHER AGAIN WHEN WE HAVE TIME.
I HAD FUN TODAY.

Geez!

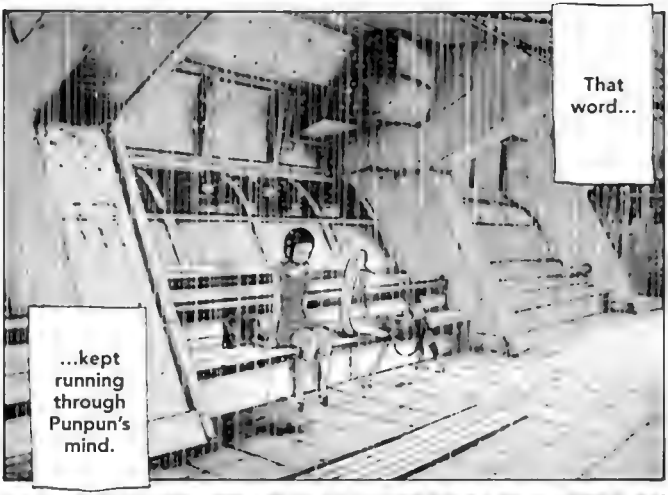


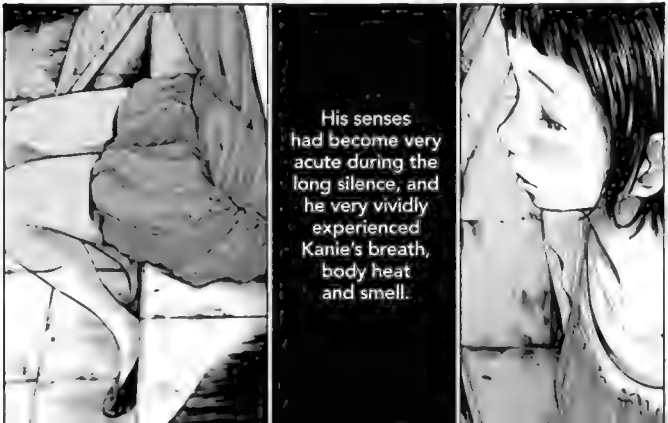
...Punpun said as calmly as he could.

"I think we should spend a little more time together now..."

OKAY...
I DON'T MIND.
SSSSSSSSH

"Slit."


That word...
...kept running through Punpun's mind.


His senses had become very acute during the long silence, and he very vividly experienced Kanie's breath, body heat and smell.

...the more his mind filled with that word. Slit.
The more he thought about needing to say something...

HEY.
WHAT ...?
YOUR MOM WILL WORRY TOO, ONODERA.
I THINK I'LL GET GOING ...
IT'S STARTING TO GET COLD.
Punpun's brain was on high speed, looking for something clever to say.
"My mom is in the hospital having an operation, so I'm fine."

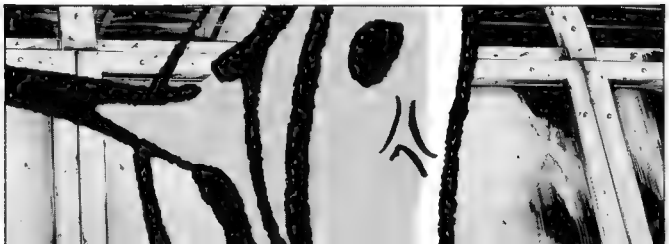
ONODERA...
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?

IF YOUR MOM'S HAVING SURGERY...
...YOU SHOULDN'T BE OUT PLAYING.

Punpun wasn't sure what Kanie was getting at.
"Whether I'm there or not has no bearing on the outcome of the surgery."
THAT'S NOT THE POINT.
I MEAN ...
...AREN'T YOU WORRIED?

BUT...
...SHE'S YOUR MOM.
ERRRR...
Honestly, Punpun didn't know why she would say something like that.
"I don't feel the need to worry."
What a stupid question, Punpun thought.
"Whether or not we're related doesn't change the fact that we are all separate beings."

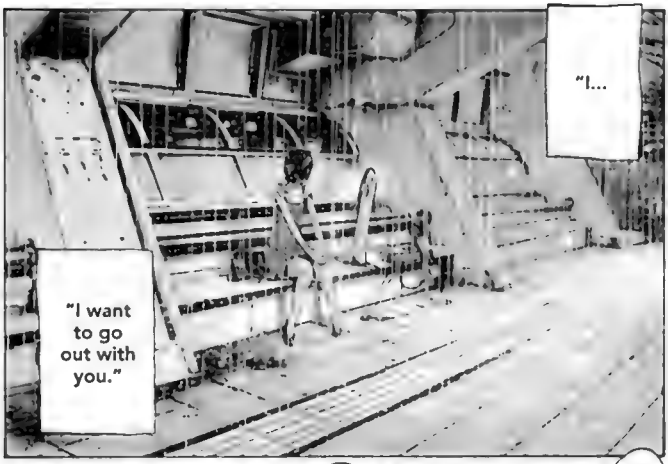
THAT'S JUST WRONG.
YOU SHOULD USE YOUR BRAIN AND THINK AGAIN.
HEY, ONODERA ...



"How about you? I question your ability to see things outside your own point of view."

Suddenly, Punpun's knees were shaking.
SO...
ONODERA, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ...?
YOU STOPPED ME FROM GOING HOME, BUT YOU WON'T SAY ANYTHING.
I'M REALLY SENSITIVE TO THE COLD.
I'M SORRY TO HAVE OFFENDED YOU.
...WERE YOU LOOKING AT MY SISTER'S PAINTING, THINKING IT WAS STUPID?
WELL ...
... WHAT?!
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
IF THERE'S SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SAY...
...JUST COME OUT AND SAY IT!

"I...



Punpun felt like he might piss his pants.

Something's not right. Something's not right. Something's not right...

No No No No
No No No No
No No No No

He didn't understand why every aspect of himself had just been so soundly negated.

Trying to get by without bothering anyone.

Punpun lived his life trying not to make waves.

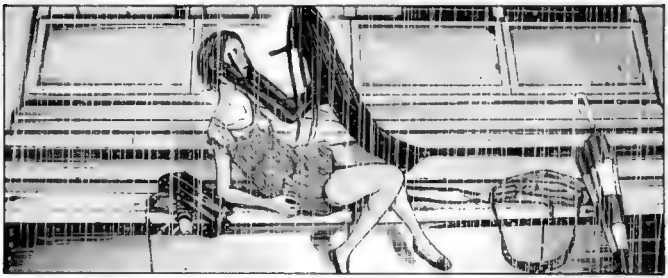
...but Punpun couldn't hear a word of it.

Kanie continued to speak...

Do it.

Do

Hiding behind social justice and spewing textbook arguments makes you far more conceited and violent than me.
Just a second ago, you were all hot and wet.



He got the gist.
Punpun got it.

Kiss me!
MIDORI ...
WHAT... TIME IS IT?
OH ...
...YOU'RE AWAKE.
IT'S JUST AFTER 9 P.M.

I'M ALIVE, RIGHT?
OF COURSE YOU ARE.
I WAS...
... DREAMING.

PUNPUN AND I WERE HAVING DINNER TOGETHER...
...AND CHATTING HAPPILY LIKE A NORMAL FAMILY.

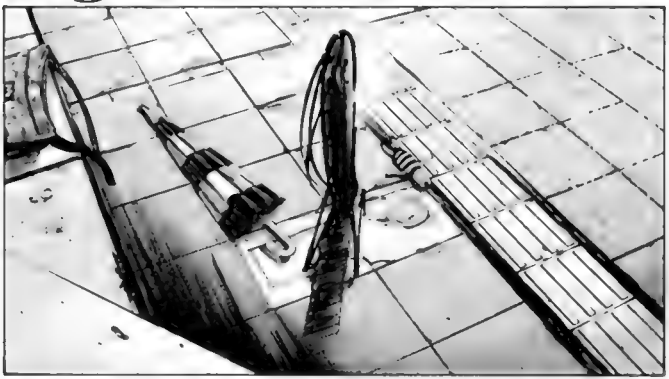
SLAP

GET ...
...OFF OF ME!

NO...
I'D RATHER GET SOAKED.
HERE ...
...TAKE IT.

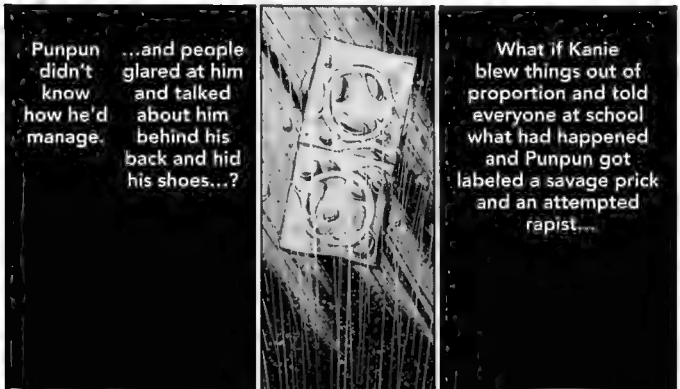
I SHOULD HAVE STAYED HOME AND STUDIED.
SIGH...

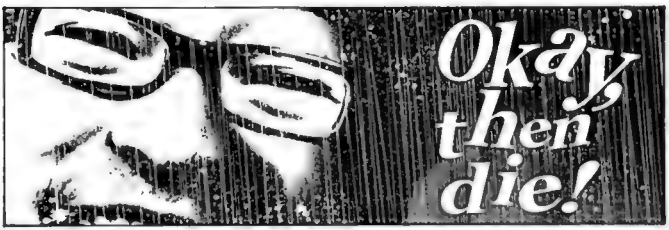
YOU'RE A VERY SAD PERSON ...
... ONODERA.

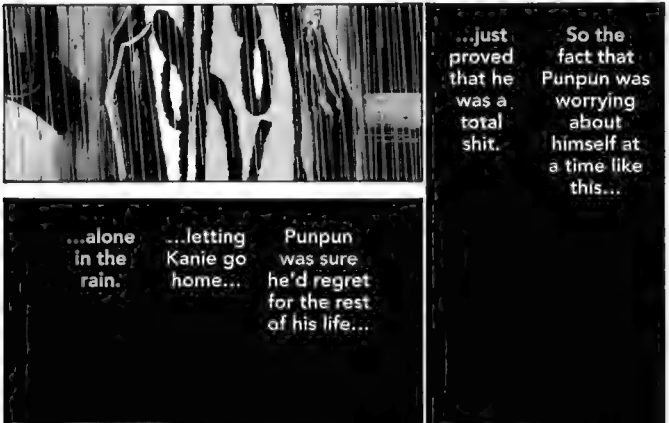


Chapter 65

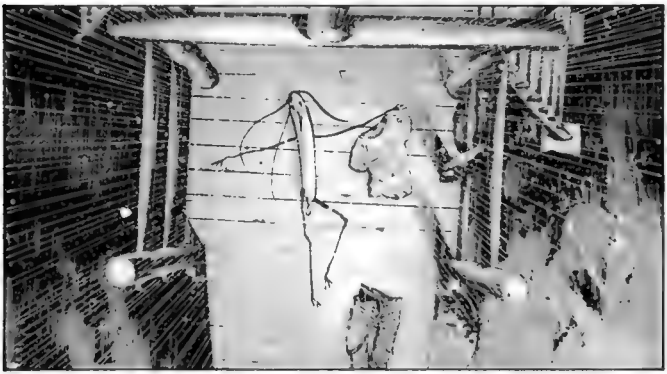
What if...
...just what if...

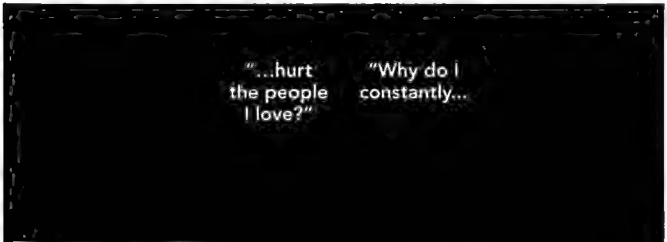

What if Kanie blew things out of proportion and told everyone at school what had happened and Punpun got labeled a savage prick and an attempted rapist...
...and people glared at him and talked about him behind his back and hid his shoes...?
Punpun didn't know how he'd manage.


Okay, then die!


...alone in the rain.
...letting Kanie go home...
Punpun was sure he'd regret for the rest of his life...
...just proved that he was a total shit.
So the fact that Punpun was worrying about himself at a time like this...

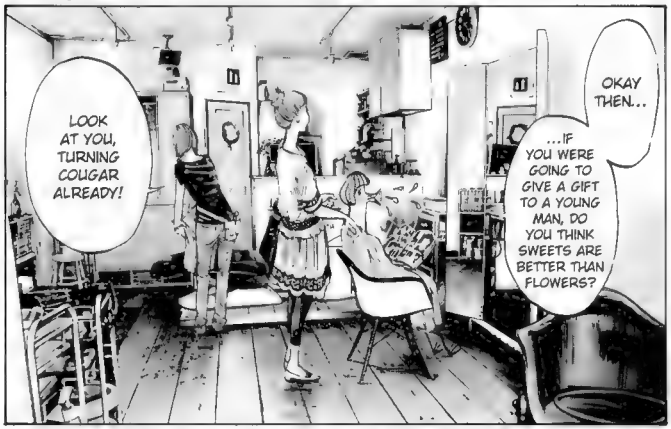
"Why is it always like this?"
Punpun thought...
"You're a very sad person, Onodera."
Kanie's words repeated over and over...
CHAK
CHAK
Come over here.

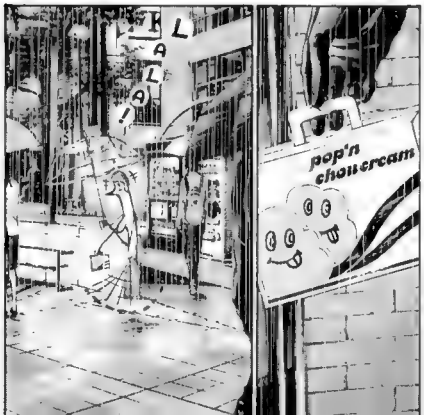



"...hurt the people I love?"
"Why do I constantly...

SPEEE!
WHEE,
I SPlooged big-time! ☆

ARE YOU SURE IT'LL LOOK OKAY?
OLD LADIES AGGRESSIVELY TRYING TO LOOK YOUNG IS PAINFUL, YOU KNOW?
NOT AT ALL. YOU COULD SAY YOU'RE IN YOUR TWENTIES ...
...AND PEOPLE WOULD TOTALLY BELIEVE YOU.
back
NY COLOR FOR
EXCEPTIONALLY
ISSFUL BOB.


OKAY THEN...
...IF YOU WERE GOING TO GIVE A GIFT TO A YOUNG MAN, DO YOU THINK SWEETS ARE BETTER THAN FLOWERS?
LOOK AT YOU, TURNING COUGAR ALREADY!


KALA!
pop'n choucream

SILLY, IT'S JUST A WHAT-IF.

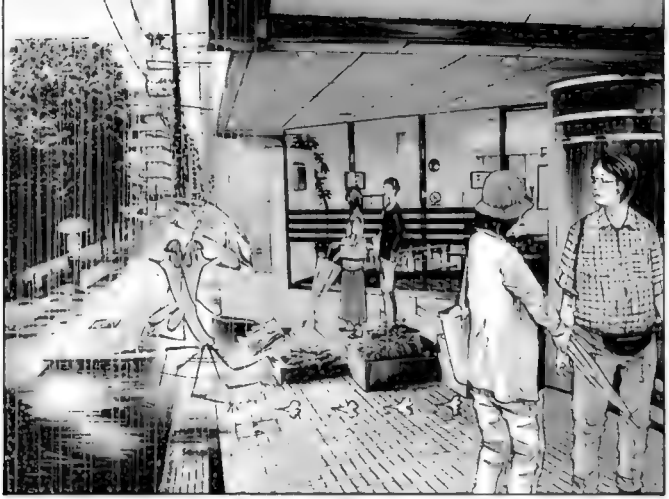
MS. ONODERA..
...GET PERMISSION BEFORE YOU GO OUT NEXT TIME, OKAY?
DON'T BE SUCH A STICK-IN-THE-MUD.
CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT I WANTED TO ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF NOT BEING ATTACHED TO AN I.V.?
ANYWAY, I'M BEING DISCHARGED TONIGHT.

THE GIRL IN THE BED ACROSS FROM ME...
WAS SHE RELEASED?

OH...
WHAT NOW?

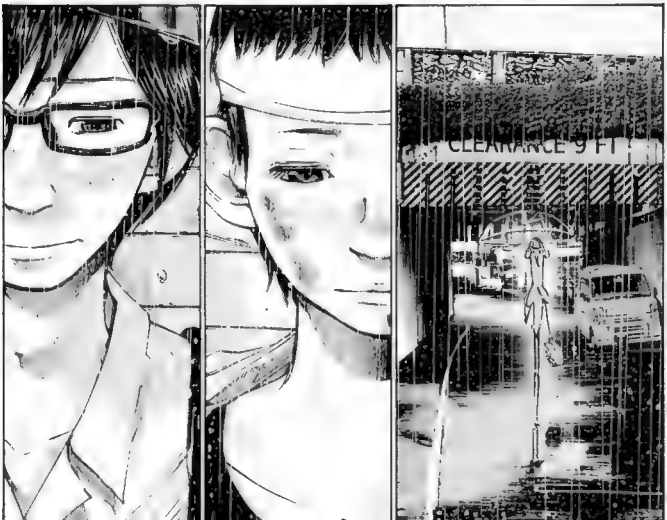
OH YEAH, JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO.
A BOY ABOUT HER AGE CAME TO PICK HER UP.

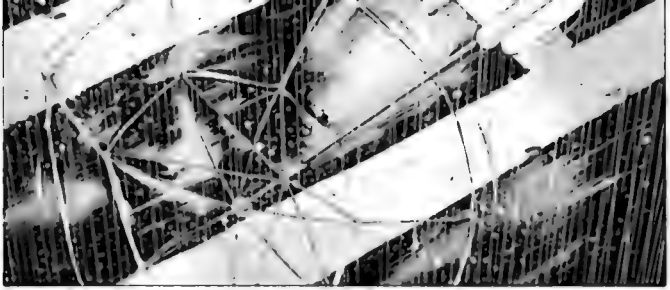
SHUNTARO?

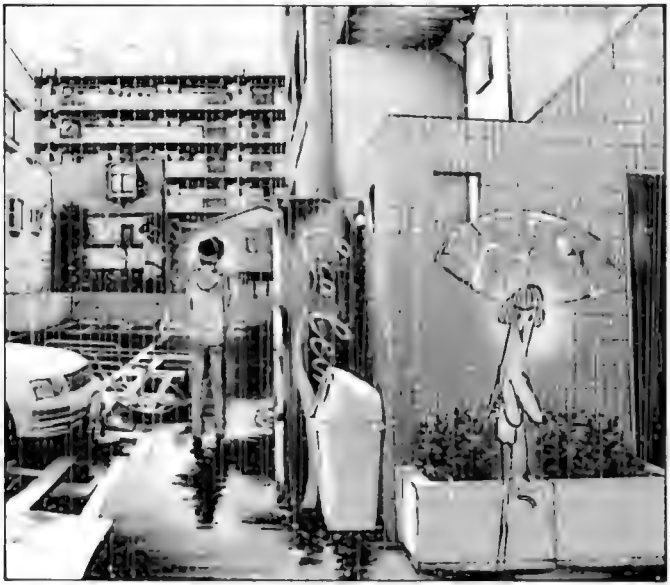


CLEARANCE 9 FT

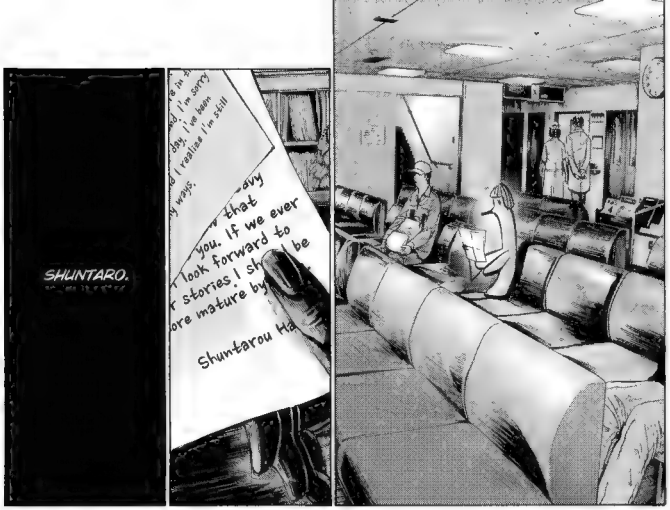
P

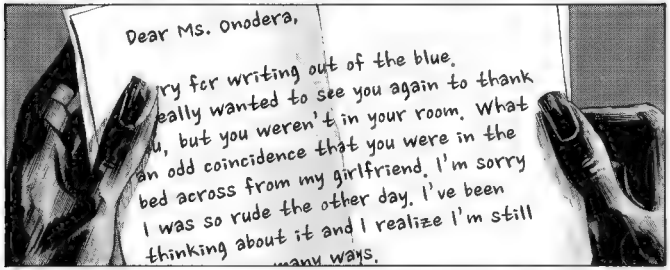

CLEARANCE 9 FT





UM...
MS. ONODERA GOT THESE CREAM PUFFS FOR US.
WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?
IT IS SUSPICIOUS.
MAYBE SHE PUT METAL SHAVINGS IN THEM.
MATRON ...
...CALL FOR YOU ON LINE TWO.
To Ms. Onodera
OH, MS. ONODERA.
AFTER YOUR X-RAY AT FOUR, YOU'RE GOING HOME...
...SO MAKE SURE YOU'RE ALL PACKED.
THERE'S A LETTER FOR YOU.


SHUNTARO.


Dear Ms. Onodera,
ry for writing out of the blue.
eally wanted to see you again to thank
u, but you weren't in your room. What
an odd coincidence that you were in the
bed across from my girlfriend. I'm sorry
I was so rude the other day. I've been
thinking about it and I realize I'm still
many ways.

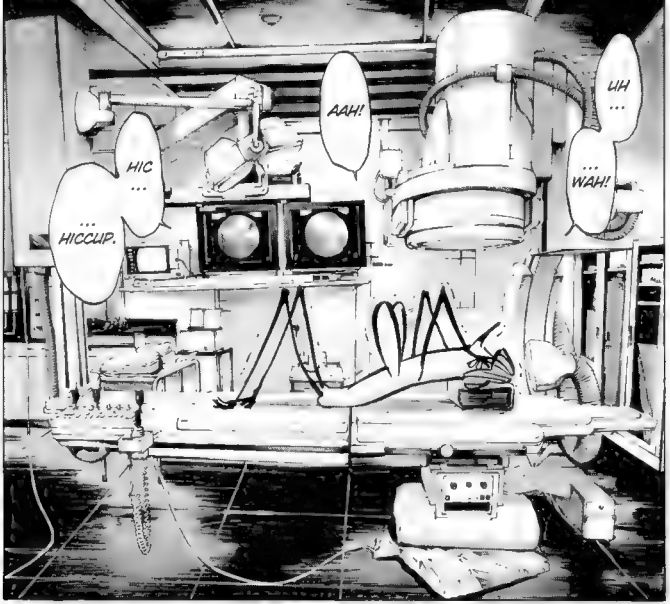
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT AND I REALIZE I'M STILL A CHILD IN SO MANY WAYS.
I'M SORRY I WAS SO RUDE THE OTHER DAY.

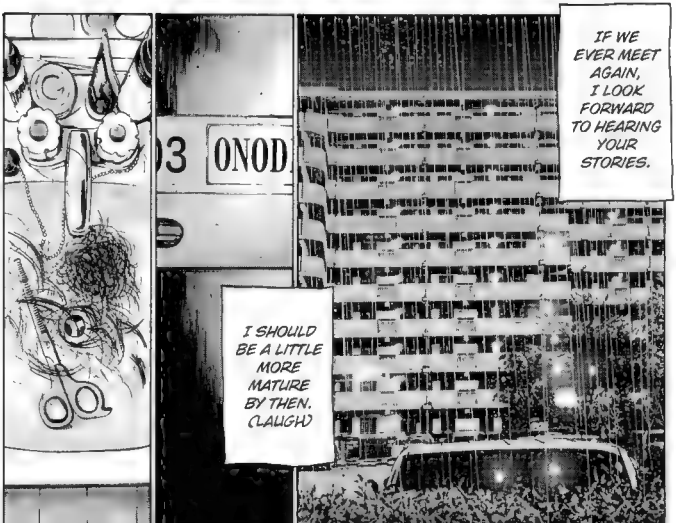
TODAY, I PLAN TO TELL HER HOW I FEEL AS HONESTLY AS I CAN.
I HAVEN'T REACHED ANY CONCLUSIONS AND I'M STILL TOTALLY LOST...
...BUT IF SHE HATES ME BECAUSE OF IT, AT LEAST I TRIED MY HARDEST.
'm still totally
hates me because of it, at least
tried my hardest. This may sound arrogant,
but talking to you made me realize that
tormented too, and that actually
a little better.
THIS MAY SOUND ARROGANT, BUT TALKING TO YOU MADE ME REALIZE...
OF COURSE I LOOK UP TO STRONG PEOPLE WHO ARE FULL OF CONFIDENCE...
...BUT I FEEL LIKE I CAN REALLY TRUST SOMEONE WHO CAN BE OPEN ABOUT THEIR VULNERABILITIES.
...THAT ADULTS ARE TORMENTED TOO, AND THAT ACTUALLY MADE ME FEEL A LITTLE BETTER.

I THINK THERE'S A FAR MORE PASSIONATE WAY TO LIVE THAN BEING SATISFIED...
...WITH A SINGLE PATH OR TORTURING YOURSELF IN THE PURSUIT OF THAT ONE RIGHT ANSWER...
PEOPLE CHANGE. THEY AGE, AND THEIR CIRCUM-STANCES CHANGE.
I DON'T THINK THERE HAS TO BE ONE ANSWER FOR HOW TO LIVE.

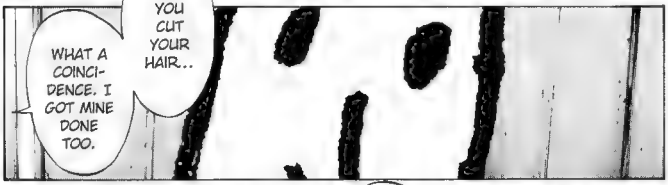
BUT I DO KNOW THAT I LIKE PEOPLE LIKE YOU.
WELL, THAT GOT A LITTLE HEAVY (LAUGH).

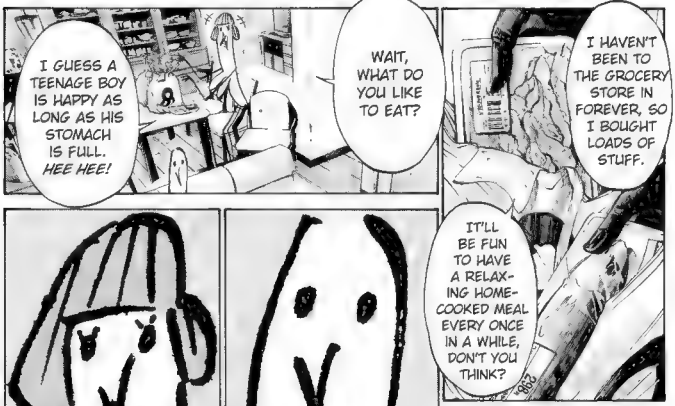
HUH? ...
MS. ONODERA.
YOU NEED TO HOLD YOUR BREATH.
...YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND AT ALL.
YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND...
...SHUT UP. SHUT UP...
SH...
I'M ALONE AGAIN.
SO THEN..
OKAY, HOLD YOUR BREATH, PLEASE.
RADIOLO
放射
診断科
レントゲン室


HIC
...
...HICCUP.
AAH!
UH
...
...WAH!


3 ONOD
I SHOULD BE A LITTLE MORE MATURE BY THEN. (LAUGH)
IF WE EVER MEET AGAIN, I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING YOUR STORIES.

I'M HOME.
HOW ARE YOU?


OH, YOU CUT YOUR HAIR...
WHAT A COINCI-DENCE. I GOT MINE DONE TOO.


I GUESS A TEENAGE BOY IS HAPPY AS LONG AS HIS STOMACH IS FULL. HEE HEE!
WAIT, WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO EAT?
I HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE GROCERY STORE IN FOREVER, SO I BOUGHT LOADS OF STUFF.
IT'LL BE FUN TO HAVE A RELAX-ING HOME-COOKED MEAL EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, DON'T YOU THINK?

SAY SOME-THING, YOU LITTLE SHIT!
HOW ABOUT A "WEL-COME HOME" ?!
P.S. PLEASE TRY TO GET ALONG WITH YOUR SON.
MY GIRLFRIEND SAYS "MS. ONODERA IS NICE" TOO.
OH...
... AARGH!
I...
...REALLY AM AN IDIOT.

Chapter 66

I DON'T CARE IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE...
...WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT.
I WAS ENVELOPED IN A WHITE LIGHT...
THAT'S RIGHT, AND I WOULDN'T OBJECT TO CALLING IT GOD.

I HEARD A VOICE...
IT SAID, "ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE WAY YOU ARE?"

I...
I FEEL REBORN.
IT'S LIKE THE DAWNING OF THE WORLD.
LIKE I'M MUCH MORE CAPABLE NOW.

I'M GOING TO DO SOME-THING HUGE!
WHA-CHA!
FOR STARTERS, I'M GOING TO LEVEL THE TOTTORI SAND DUNES.
THEN I'LL BECOME A COMEDIAN AND OPEN A HOT POT RESTAURANT IN AKASAKA.
SO, MIMURA ...
...HOW LOW DID YOU RANK ON THE FINALS?
ABOUT 15 FROM THE BOTTOM, I THINK.
YEAH ...
I CAN'T RELATE AT ALL, BUT HANG IN THERE.

ALL OF A SUDDEN ...
...IT'S SUMMER.
HEY, ONOTTI..
...HOW ABOUT WE GET SOME HOTTIES AT THE BEACH THIS SUMMER?
IF WE DON'T GET ON IT, OUR YOUTH WILL BE GONE.
HEY, MIMURA ...
...YOU JUST LOOKED UP MY SKIRT, DIDN'T YOU?
WHAT ?!
I DID NOT.
IS IT TRUE THAT YOU WERE THE CLASS SERF IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, MIMURA?
DID YOU COME HERE EVEN THOUGH IT'S OUT OF YOUR DISTRICT SO YOU COULD ESCAPE YOUR PAST?
HEY, HEY...
...WAIT A MINUTE, MISSY.

HEY ...
YOUR DESPERATE ATTEMPTS TO MAKE A SPLASH IN HIGH SCHOOL ARE TOTALLY PATHETIC...
I SAW YOU WALKING WITH AN OLD GUY IN AN EXPENSIVE SUIT THE OTHER DAY...
...ESPECIALLY BECAUSE YOU'RE FAILING SO COMPLETELY.
YOU... YOU SLUTTY SLUT SLUT!

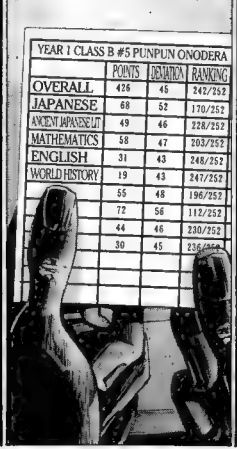
HIGH, YOU JUST MADE THAT UP.
YOU'RE DISGUSTING.
DISGUSTING.

YOU..
...YOU CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL!
MAN SIGN!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH LIVING WITH PASSION?
GYA HA!

Acting tough, bragging ...

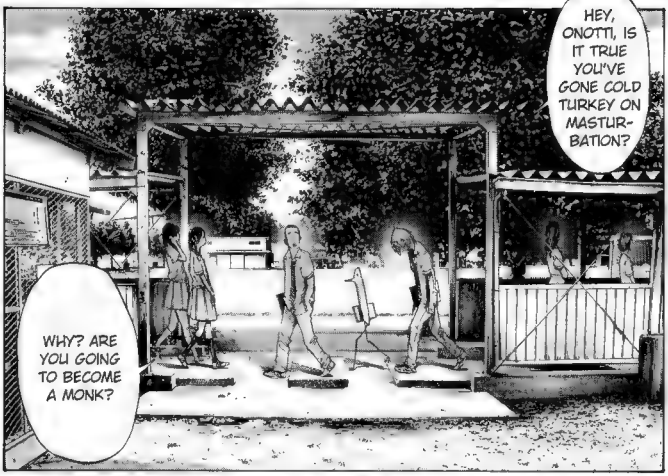
...saying things you shouldn't, not being able to say things you should...

It's all just a hassle, Punpun thought.


YEAR 1 CLASS B #5 PUNPUN ONODERA
POINTS DEVIATION RANKING
OVERALL 426 45 242/252
JAPANESE 68 52 170/252
ANCIENT JAPANESE LIT 49 46 228/252
MATHEMATICS 58 47 203/252
ENGLISH 31 43 248/252
WORLD HISTORY 19 43 247/252
55 48 196/252
72 56 112/252
44 46 230/252
30 45 236/252

...what youth was all about.

Punpun didn't really understand...

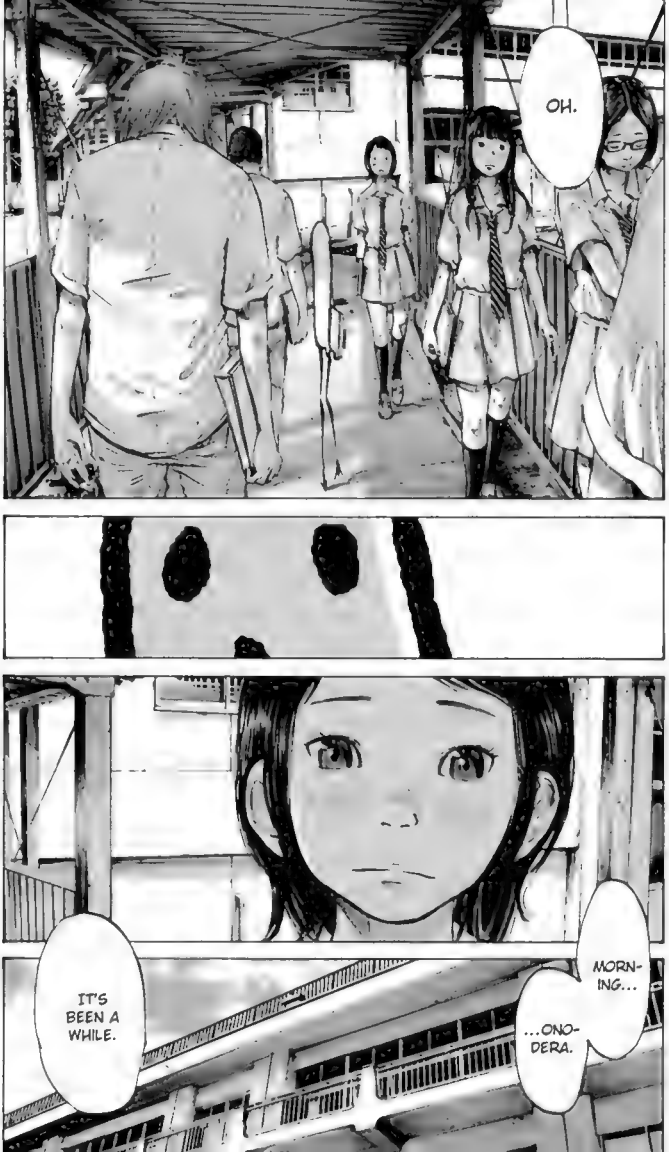


Punpun was starting to lose the will to live.

...seemed almost impossible.

..."I was so young then, but those were good times"...

When he was grown-up, being able to say...


OH.
MORN-
ING...
...ONO-
DERA.
IT'S
BEEN A
WHILE.

I HEAR THE RAINY SEASON'S OVER NOW.
IT'S SO NICE OUT...
IT JUST STOPPED STORMING YESTERDAY.
SHORT HAIR SUITS YOU, ONODERA.
WHAT? WELL, OF COURSE IF YOU LEAVE IT ALONE, HAIR GROWS ...

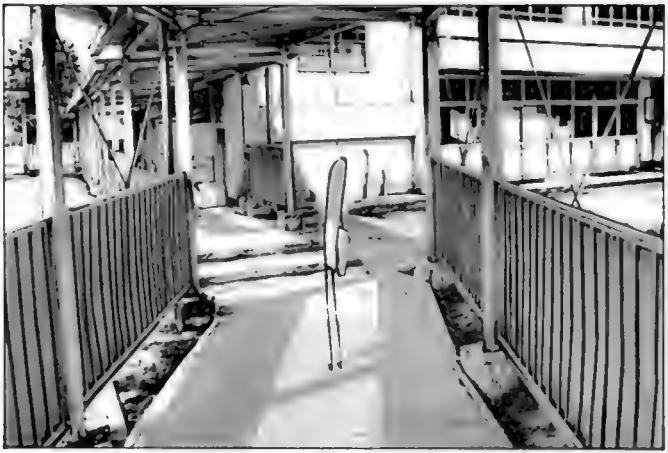
LET'S GO.
KANIE...

BYE-BYE.
...I NEED TO GO.
SORRY ...

...any shred of confidence.

...Punpun had already lost...

Actually...



MS. ONODERA!
WHOA!
DON'T SCARE ME. I JUST PEED A LITTLE.
THE GIANTS COME BACK AT THE LAST MINUTE AND WIN IT WITH A TWO-RUN HOME RUN!
I'VE BEEN CALLING YOUR NAME.

YOU'RE WRITING A LETTER?
HA HA, THAT'S SO NOT LIKE YOU.
NEVER MIND. LEAVE ME ALONE.

UMM, MS. ONODERA ...
...YOU SEEM TO BE RECOVERING WELL FROM SURGERY.
AFTER WE REMOVE YOUR STITCHES TODAY, YOU CAN GO HOME.

DOCTOR ...
...MY SIDE IS REALLY TINGLY.
AND WHEN I SEE YOU, MY HEART POUNDS.
OH, THAT'S NEURALGIA CAUSED BY THE SURGERY.
NO NEED TO WORRY. IT'LL GO AWAY EVENTU-ALLY.

THAT'S IT?
I DIDN'T NEED TO WORRY.
PLBBBT!

ACTUALLY, MS. ONODERA.
HAVE YOU EVER HAD A CANCER SCREEN-ING?
YES?

FROM THE LOOKS OF THIS CT SCAN...
I HAVE CANCER?
WELL ...
...WE CAN'T SAY FOR CERTAIN UNTIL WE RUN SOME TESTS...
BUT YOU'RE YOUNG, SO IF IT IS CANCER, IT'S PROBABLY AGGRESSIVE.
OH, DOCTOR ...
...HEE HEE.
THIS IS A BAD TIME TO BE CALLING ME YOUNG.

It was very normal.

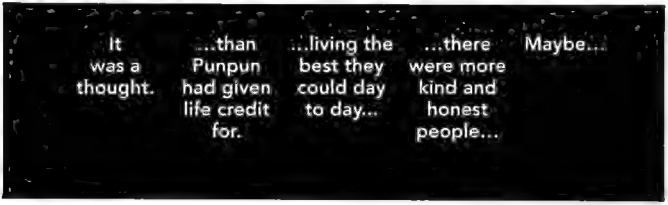
...didn't involve being the class serf or having his shoes hidden...

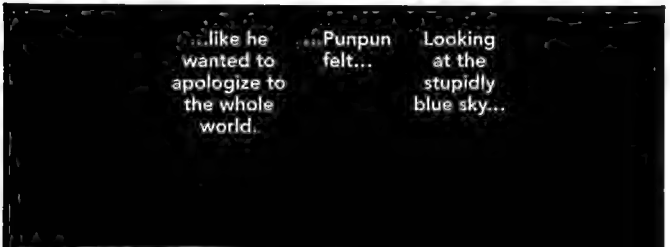
High school for Punpun...

Possibly she was an angel incarnate.

Kanie seemed to have buried deep in her heart the savage act Punpun had perpetrated.

Iwama
Silver
Fox
Employment
Agency
CD/VIDEO/DVD RENTALS
レンタルショップ


It was a thought.
...than Punpun had given life credit for.
...living the best they could day to day...
...there were more kind and honest people...
Maybe...


...like he wanted to apologize to the whole world.
...Punpun felt...
Looking at the stupidly blue sky...

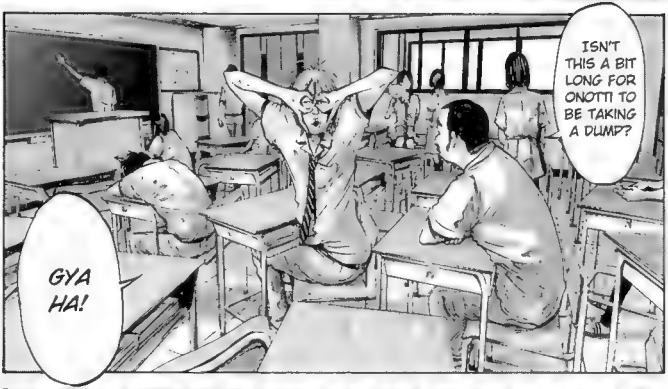
Punpun understood clearly...

...that there was no God.

...lying around without purpose.

...a stagnant, rotten soul...

There was only...



...Punpun could do now.

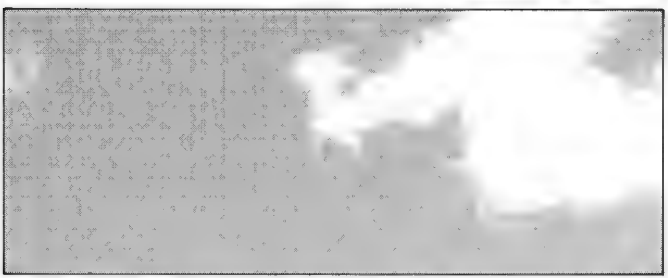
...then there was only one thing...

...came from people's hearts...

...good, bad or otherwise...

If everything in the world...

"I'll never fall in love again."

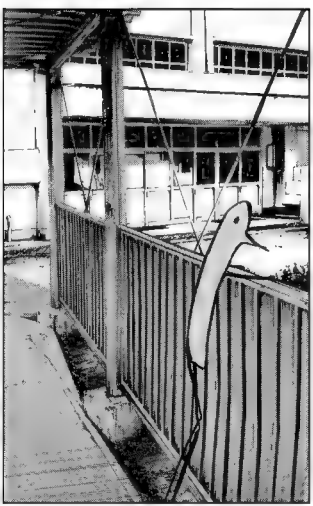


Goodnight, Punpun.

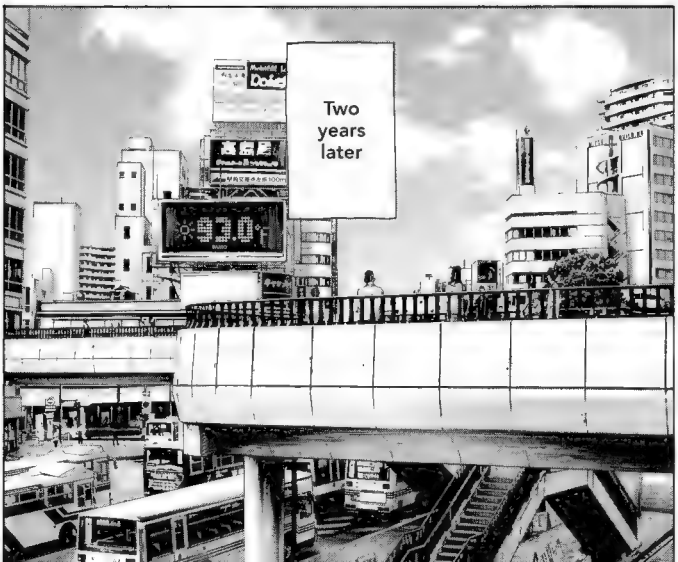
That's enough for today.

...so he softly closed his eyes.

The warm winds wrapping around him made Punpun want to cry...



Chapter 67



HONESTLY ...
...I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THESE OLD PEOPLE WHO'VE FINISHED RAISING KIDS AND AREN'T WORKING ANYMORE ARE STILL ALIVE.
ESPECIALLY THE ONES WITH THE ARROGANT ATTITUDE, LIKE THEY'RE NOT GOING TO RELY ON US YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE CARE OF THEM SOON.
IF ALL THEY DO WITH THEIR LIVES IS WATCH TV AND PLAY PACHINKO, IT'S BETTER ECOLOGICALLY IF THEY JUST DIE.
SHUT UP, STUPID. SOMEONE WILL HEAR.
YOU'LL BE FINE...
YOU'RE A VERY STRONG WOMAN.
SO THE TEST RESULTS ARE IN...
YOU'RE THE BIG SISTER...
...SO YOU NEED TO TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING.

BIG BOOBS, BIG BOOBS...
BOOBIES, BOOBIES.
BOOBIES
YOU GOT IT, YUICHI?
YOU DON'T NEED ME. YOU'LL BE FINE BY YOURSELF.
DON'T TELL DAD AND MOM.
I CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS MYSELF.
AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE ONLY PERSON YOU CAN RELY ON IS YOURSELF.
THE ONLY THING YOU CAN TRULY BELIEVE IN IS YOUR-SELF.

YOU KNOW, I DON'T WANT TO BE THE ONE TO SAY IT...
...BUT I DON'T KNOW ANY-ONE ELSE WHO HAS THE SELF-CONFIDENCE I DO.
I FEEL LIKE I'LL GET EVERYTHING I'VE EVER WANTED.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I THINK YOU MIGHT PULL OFF SOME-THING BIG ONE DAY.
RIGHT?
YOU CAN'T BE PIGEON-HOLED, RIGHT, BABY?
BUT I FEEL LIKE A VAGUELY SELF-CONFIDENT PERSON WHO MIGHT JUST END UP WITH NOTHING.
YEAH, YEAH.

YOU HAVE CANCER.
SERIOUSLY, YOU'RE GOING TO MARRY PUNYAMA?!
YOU CAN'T BE A MOM!
NNN, NNN ...
... WAAAH!
AAAHH!
... PANT PANT ...
MRS. PUNYAMA, WE CAN SEE YOUR BABY'S HEAD.
OKAY, HEE HEE HOO!

I UNDERSTAND..
...THAT YOU'RE A VERY LONELY PERSON.
YOU ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO ME IN THE WORLD..
...AND YOU NEED ME.
YOU SAY THAT, BUT YOU'RE OFF TO WORK AGAIN TOMORROW.
LIAR.
I'M A JUICY THIRTY-SOMETHING MARRIED WOMAN.
GO, GO!
I'LL BE WAITING TO HEAR FROM YOU ADULT GENTLEMEN OVERFLOWING WITH CARNAL DESIRE.
YOU... YOU RUINED MY LIFE.

SO HAVE THE DE-CENCY ...
...TO DIE WITH ME.
HEE HEE ...
...JUST KID-DING.
OF COURSE I'M KIDDING.
SO, PLEASE ...
...DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.

SIS...
CAN YOU HEAR ME? IT'S MIDORI.
LOOK, PUNPUN'S HERE TOO.

PUN-
PUN
...
...DO
YOU
STILL
HATE
...
...ME?
YOU
DO
...
...
HEE
HEE.
I DID A
LOT OF
TERRIBLE
THINGS
TO YOU.
YOU
KNOW
...
I
DON'T
LOVE
YOU
A BIT
EITHER.

BE-
CAUSE
...
...
THAT'S
...
...THE KIND OF RELATION-SHIP WE HAVE, RIGHT?
YOU KNOW
...
...I THINK I'M GOING TO DIE SOON.
PUN-
PUN
...
...LET ME SEE YOU.

PUN-PUN ...
I'M SCARED.
I'M SCARED ...
...OF DYING.
I'M SORRY ...
I'M SORRY ...
I'M SORRY ...
I'M SORRY, PUNPUN.

...I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH.

BUT REALLY ...

98.0°F
SAIKO

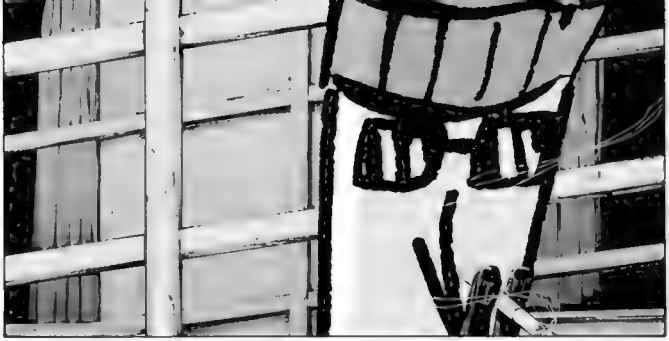
98.0°F
SAIKO
CONDOS

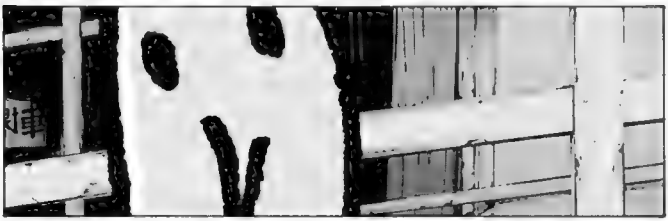
CREMATORIUM

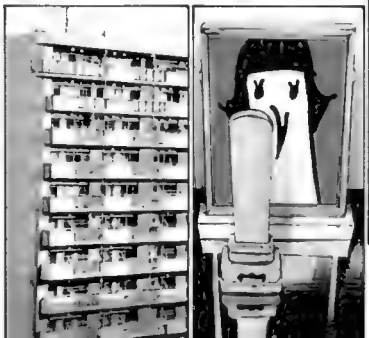
GOODNIGHT PUNPUN

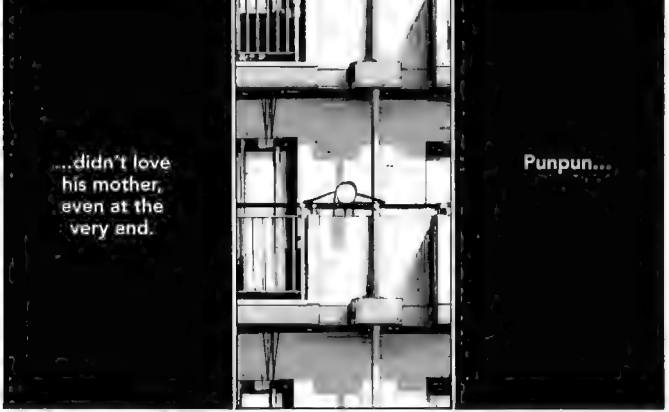
Part Six

INIO ASANO

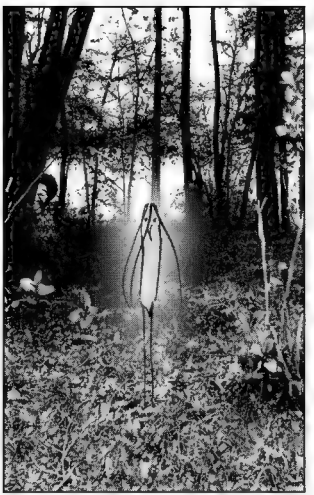







...didn't love his mother, even at the very end.
Punpun...

横断禁止

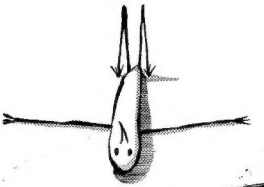


GOODNIGHT PUNPUN INIO ASANO
Part Six

BACKGROUND ASSISTANTS Yuki Toribuchi
Satsuki Sato
CG ASSISTANT Hisashi Saito
COOPERATION Kumatsuto

THE RISE OF PAPA PUNPUN

INIO ASANO, a bona fide earthling, was born in Ibaraki, Japan, in 1980. In 2001, his short story "Uchu kara Konnichiwa" (Hello from Outer Space) won the first Sunday GX Rookie Prize. Later, GX published his series *Subarashi Sekai*, available in English from VIZ Media as *What a Wonderful World!* His other works include *Hikari no Machi* (City of Light), *Nijigahara Holograph* and *Umibe no Onna no Ko* (A Girl on the Shore), as well as *solanin*, also available from VIZ Media.



GOODNIGHT PUNPUN

Volume 3

VIZ Signature Edition

Story and Art by INIO ASANO

OYASUMI PUNPUN Vol. 5, 6
by Inio ASANO
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